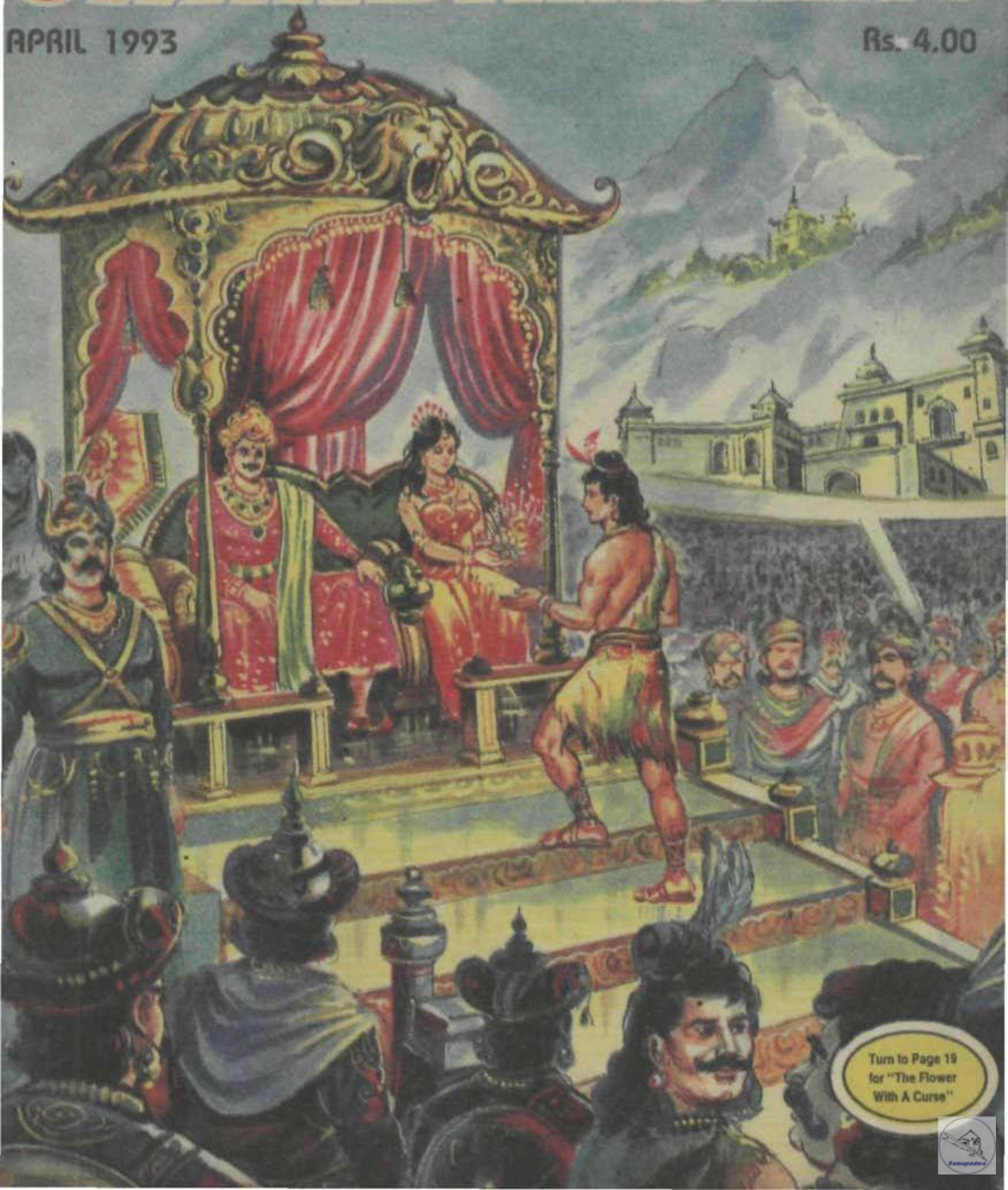


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CHANDAMAMA

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**And News Flash, Let Us Know
and More!**

NEXT ISSUE

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THE FLOWER WITH A CURSE : Raj Guru Gaurinath relates to King Pratapvarma and Princess Priyamvada how a flower with an exotic fragrance was misused by the vagabond brother of an ancestor-king of Maninagar, and how the evil-doer and the flower, too, came under a curse. He warns them that the blooming of the flower after a long spell of curse may bring in misery to the kingdom. The Raj Guru's fears are not entirely unfounded.

VEER HANUMAN : When there is a respite during the battle between Mahiravana, the King of Patala, and Rama and Lakshmana, Hanuman tells them that he would now go in search of Chandrasena who knows the secret powers of Mahiravana, so that they will be in a better position to defeat the demon. He finds her being tortured and goes to her rescue. She sends him to the cave where he will find a casket holding the five beetles safeguarding Mahiravana's very life. Hanuman gets hold of the casket and confronts Mahiravana.

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Printed by B.V. REDDI at Prasad Process Private Ltd, 188 N.S.K. Salai, Madras 600 026 (India) and published by B. VISWANATHA REDDI on behalf of CHANDAMAMA PUBLICATIONS, Chandamama Buildings, Vadapalani, Madras 600 026 (India). The stories, articles and designs contained herein are the exclusive property of the publishers and copying or adapting them in any manner will be dealt with according to law.



Controlling Editor :
NAGI REDDI



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CHAKRAPANI

A Century of Peace

January 3 was an historic day. The United States of America and Russia signed a treaty to reduce the number of nuclear weapons they had amassed in their backyard. This Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START II) signed by President George Bush and President Yeltsin came off during the U.S. leader's farewell visit to Moscow. As you would have read in the March issue, President Bill Clinton took over from him on January 20.

The Treaty was prominently reported on Page one of all newspapers the next day. Tucked away in an obscure corner was a small part of the news item.

On the morning of January 3, the two Presidents and their wives began the day by visiting the Kremlin where several hundred children were celebrating the New Year. They were overjoyed when the distinguished personalities joined their party. The master of ceremonies introduced the VIPs to them and said: "Children, today a wonderful treaty will be signed, a treaty that will make all our lives easier." And he went on to give them the details of the treaty.

Some of the young listeners must have surely raised a question if they had been given a chance to speak to the two Presidents at leisure: Why do they want to retain even that number of weapons they expect to be left with at the end of ten years as agreed upon?

The U.S. President hailed START II as a "treaty of hope for mankind dreaming of disarmament", while the Russian leader asserted that the agreement would provide a "guarantee for global security".

More than security, what the growing generation would expect from the world's two most powerful nations is *total disarmament* and an assurance of *everlasting global peace*. In the next ten years, let the warheads become mere 'defence-heads', to coin an expression. Wars, after all, are born in the minds of men. If so, can't man totally remove that word from his mind?

Let everybody usher in a century of Peace in the coming ten years! Is it too much to ask for?



CONFLICT IN CANADA



They are good friends elsewhere, but in Canada the English and the French have been squabbling for nearly two hundred years. The country recently held a referendum to ascertain the people's approval whether the constitution should be amended with a view to ending the political dispute between England and France over Canada and unifying the country. Seven of the ten provinces returned a clear "no" to the single question made in the referendum, while the other three said "yes".

Canada, as we know of it today, came into existence some five hundred years ago when the English explorer John Cabot reached the coasts of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia in 1497. England soon established its supremacy over these areas. Within the next forty or fifty years, a French explorer, Jacques Cartier, arrived in a village south of present-day Quebec and heard the Red Indian settlers referring to the dwellings there as *canatha*. The name Canada is believed to have been coined out of this word in Huron language in later years. Meanwhile, the then French government declared the place as a royal province calling it "New France".

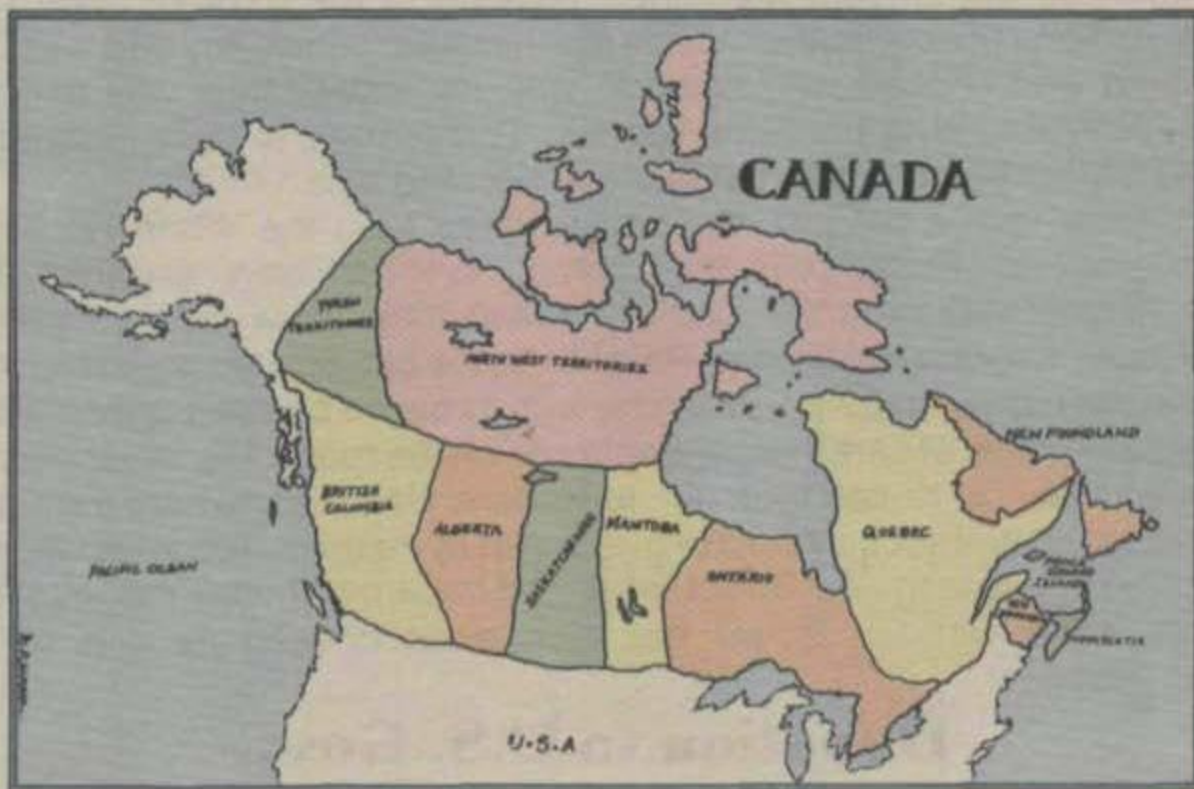
In the 17th century, an open conflict had started between England and France. In the Treaty of Utrecht, in 1713, England gained some territories, and by the Treaty of Paris in 1769, at the end of the Seven Years War, Canada was ceded to Britain which, in the next hundred years, established a confederation of Quebec, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. In course of time, Manitoba, British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan were added to the confederation.

By the Statute of Westminster in 1931, the vast country was redefined as an independent dominion in the British Commonwealth.



As can be imagined, some of the provinces, like Quebec, have a predominantly French-speaking population wishing to protect their language and culture. As a result, the separatist pressures on both sides have been a recurring problem.

For the past two years, serious discussions and debates have been going on aimed at dampening the secessionist sentiments, especially in Quebec. Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and the Premiers of the ten provinces even negotiated a package of reforms that included a special status for Quebec, making the Senate an elected body instead of an appointed one, and granting of self-rule to the country's native Red Indians and Eskimos. They came to an agreement on August 28, 1992.



So, the referendum merely asked the question : "Do you agree that the constitution be amended on the basis of the understanding reached on August 28?" Quebec came out with an emphatic 'no', as the package falls short of an independent status for it; Ontario, which is Canada's most populous province, rejected the proposal. The referendum also lost in Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. The three provinces of Newfoundland, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island alone supported it. The constitution can be amended only with the approval of the Federal Parliament and the legislatures of all ten provinces.

As a fall-out of the rejection of the proposal, Mr. Mulroney, who had even otherwise proved to be an unpopular leader in Canada's post-War history, has resigned.



Three youngsters were in the news recently. All of them from the U.S.A., though one is of Indian origin and is also the oldest of them all.

"Face of Hope"

Roger Kuttan, son of Dr. Appu Kuttan from Kerala, was one of the 50 invited to a special lunch and other functions at the Presidential Inauguration in Washington on January 20. President Bill Clinton called them

"Faces of Hope". Roger (19), who was the only Asian among them, stood on the steps leading to the Lincoln Memorial "basking in the glow of hope spreading warmth in millions of Americans" When the invitation came, "my dad was proud, my mom Shanta was choked with emotion, and my sister Maya was excited," said Kuttan Jr. After returning home he remarked, "It is hard to believe that I not only witnessed history being made, but actually became a part of it."

The Kuttans have a flat just 15 minutes drive from the White House. "You're welcome anytime." Roger told Bill Clinton. "We can have a game of tennis." Clinton's 13-year-old daughter Chelsea asked him: "How did you get to be so smart?" Roger is a whizkid. Named Raj at birth, his classmates preferred to call him Roger, and the name remained. When he was three, he began juggling with figures on the number plates of cars that he would see on the roads. His father was amazed. When he was six, Dr. Kuttan took him to Harkins University where the boy scored 90% marks in the entrance exam. He graduated in mathematics when he was nine. The very next hop was to Wall Street, where he became "money manager" to some billionaires. Little wonder, Roger has also been chosen as one of Clinton's economic advisers!



Donation to U.S. Govt.

Larry Villella of Fargo, North Dakota, is only 14, but he runs a business which sprinkles trees and shrubs. From his earnings, he donated 1,000 dollars to the U.S. administration, after he heard President Clinton's appeal to bring down the budget deficit. "A remarkable gesture!" commented Clinton. "Citizens are not in the habit of sending money. I really appreciate it." Larry has suggested that the money be spent on education and AIDS research.



Youngest publisher

David Letterman, who has a talk show on the TV called "Late Night", the other day interviewed 10-year-old Blake Slansky (at left) of Glen Ellyn. This Fourth Grader was chosen because he is the publisher of "Out of This World", a newspaper that he started four years ago, which has subscribers all over the world, David being one of them.

How much is zero divided by zero?

The arithmetic class was on for the students of the primary class. The teacher used to make the day's lesson as interesting as possible. One method was to draw pictures on the blackboard. That day he drew three bananas. He then turned to face the students. "We've three bananas and they've to be given to three children. How many bananas will each child get?"

The problem was a simple one, because several hands went up at the same time. "Yes?" the teacher asked them, though he was sure what their answer would be. He pointed his finger at one of them. The boy stood up and said, "Each child will get one banana!"

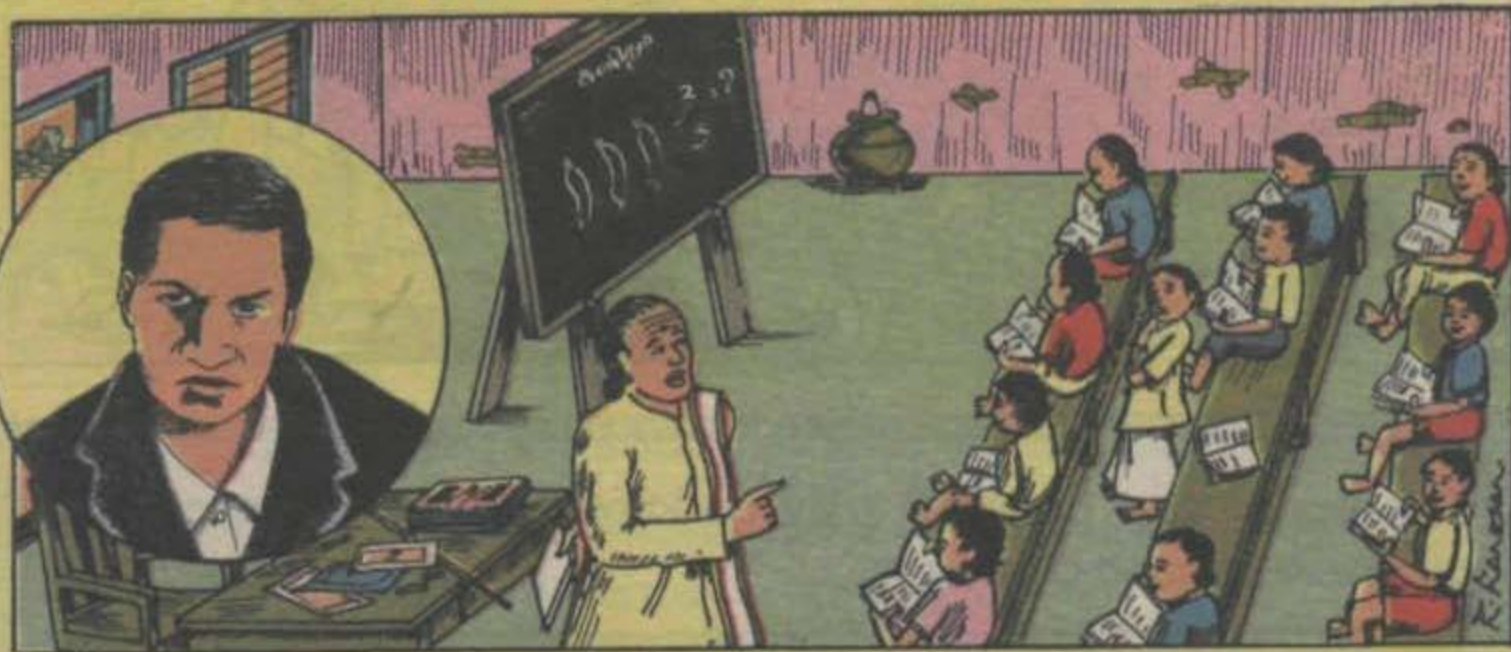
"You're right," he complimented the boy and went on to explain the method of division. He had hardly started when another boy stood up. Evidently he had a doubt or he had a different answer. "Yes?" the teacher prompted him.

"Sir, suppose the bananas are *not* distributed, will the child's share be still one banana?" The other students thought it was a silly question, and they giggled.

"There's nothing to laugh at!" the teacher chided them. "He simply wants to know whether the result will be one, when zero is divided by zero. Isn't it, Ramanujan?"

Yes, it was Srinivasa Ramanujan, who later became a great mathematician. He was only six or seven at that time. "When we divide three by three, we get one; four by four again is one. However, if zero is divided by zero, the answer is *not* one, but zero. That does not mean, three divided by three is three!" the teacher explained.

Incidentally, there was a school of thought that zero divided by zero is *not* zero, but infinity!



THE BIRDS HOLD A MEETING TO ELECT THEIR KING.



WHAT'S THE GOOD IN HAVING GARUDA AS OUR KING? HE NEVER SPARES A MOMENT FOR US FROM HIS SERVICE TO VISHNU.

HE DOESN'T EVEN LISTEN TO OUR PRAYERS.



YES. EVEN WHEN WE'RE IN TROUBLE!

AVOID A DULL TEACHER, AN UNBELIEVING PRIEST, AN INDIFFERENT KING, AND A SHAMP-TONGUED WIFE.

YES! YOU'RE RIGHT.

TRUE, TRUE!



LET'S HAVE THIS OWL AS OUR KING. HE LOOKS WISE AND RESPONSIBLE.



THE BIRDS MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR A GRAND CORONATION.



WITH BOUQUETS AND GARLANDS, FESTOONS AND SHAMIANAS, NUTS AND FRUITS...



TRUMPETS AND PIPES, AND SO ON. AT THAT MOMENT, A CROW ENTERS THE SCENE AND CAWS LOUDLY.



KA, KA, KAI WHY HAVE YOU ALL GATHERED HERE?



The worthy and unworthy may be known by the existence or otherwise of good offsprings.
—Thirukkural





If you wish that greatness should never leave you, you should exercise patience in your conduct.

THE KINGDOM IS IN THE GRIP OF A DROUGHT.

WE'RE DYING OF THIRST. THERE'S NOT A DROP OF WATER ANYWHERE.

O! KING! IF IT CONTINUES LIKE THIS, WE'LL ALL PERISH!

GO AT ONCE TO THE EIGHT CORNERS OF OUR KINGDOM IN SEARCH OF WATER!



OH! SO THIRSTY!

AHH!



EIGHT ELEPHANTS SET OUT IMMEDIATELY IN EIGHT DIRECTIONS IN SEARCH OF WATER.



AFTER SOME TIME...

AHA! HERE'S A LAKE FULL OF WATER! GOD IS MERCIFUL TO US.



LET'S GO AND TELL OUR KING.



IN THE KING'S PRESENCE...

GOOD NEWS! LET'S FORTHWITH HURRY TO THAT PLACE.



THE ELEPHANTS RUSH EAGERLY TOWARDS THE LAKE, CRUSHING UNDER THEIR FEET MANY RABBITS WHO DWELL ON THE BANKS.



WATER! WATER!

AHA!

OH! MY GOD! OH! MY EYES! OH! OH! MY LEG!

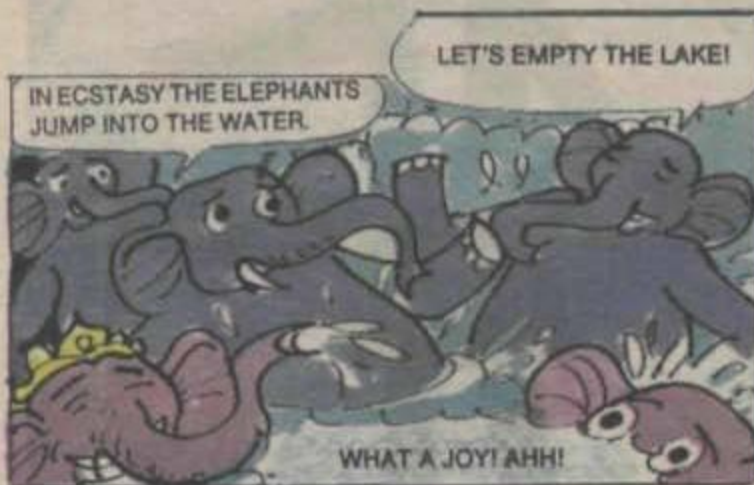


WATER! WATER! AHHA!



Let him not do evil to others if he does not wish sorrows to pursue him.





To Continue

He who hides himself under the mask of an ascetic and commits sins is like a hunter who conceals himself in the thicket to catch birds.

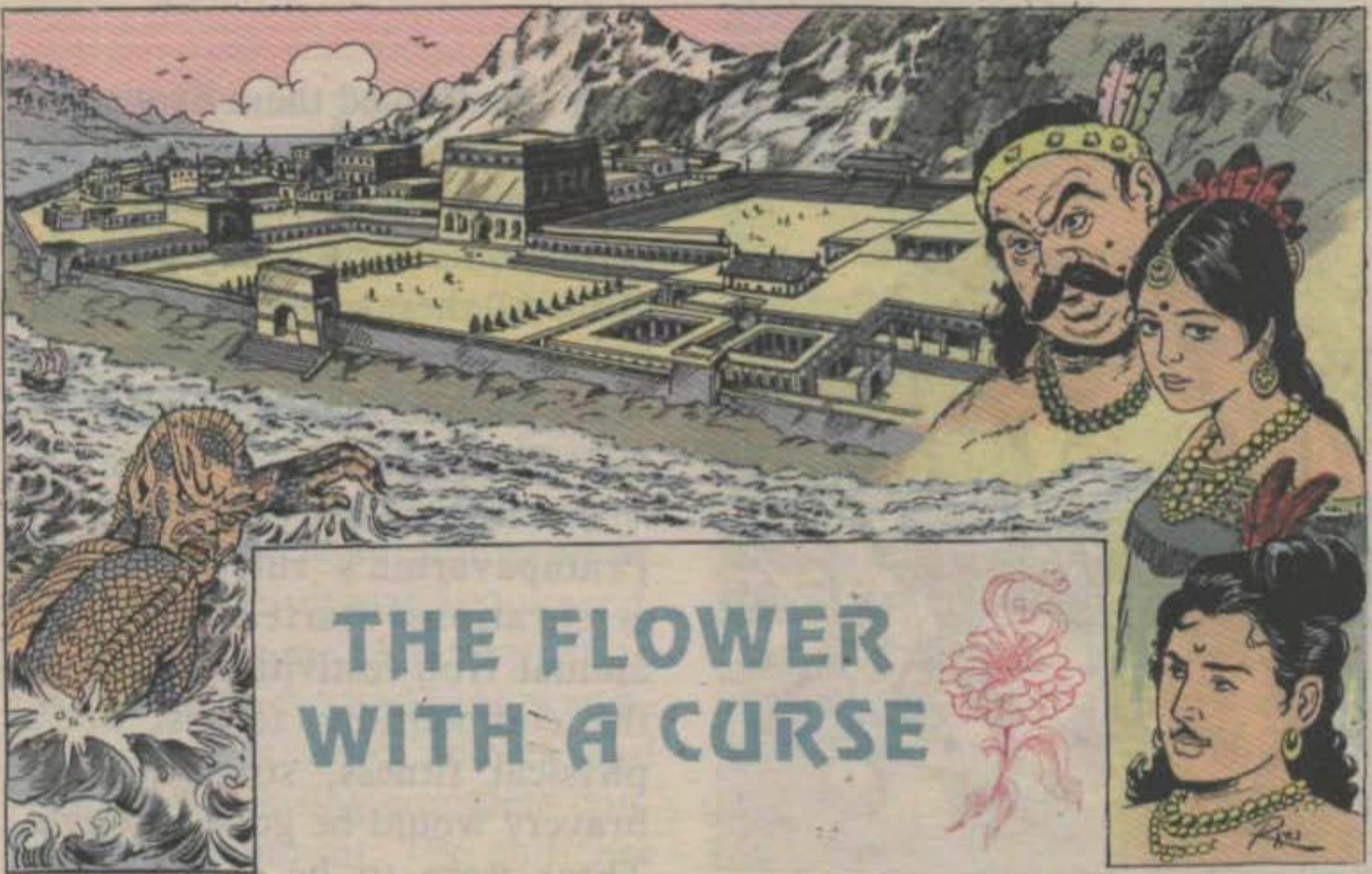
Asleep in the air! Howzat?

Maahesh Hariharan of Bombay had gone for a magic show where he saw the magician putting to sleep a brave young man from the audience on a table-like thing and, at one stage, removing the table to show the youth suspended in the air as it were, by waving his wand below the body. Maahesh heard the man in the next seat



exclaim, "Perfect *hypnosis*!" The word is not new to Maahesh, but he wants to know how different it is from *clairvoyance* and *telepathy*. In the feat of 'hypnotism', what the magician did was to induce sleep in the 'medium' and put him into a state of unconsciousness and make him respond to his command of lying flat even without a table! The young man was not aware that the table had been removed. Luckily, Maahesh does not ask how the youth did not fall down due to gravity! For an answer, we must get back to the magician! In *clairvoyance*, the magician will claim some special powers which enable him to see things not normally present to the senses (he may talk with the spirits of dead people!) or to know about events yet to happen. The magician uses *telepathy* to 'read' your mind when you stand before him. Beware, he may even read your mischievous thoughts, if you have any! *Telepathy* is the power to communicate between one mind and another without the need for speech, writing, touch, or signal. For that matter, the two persons can be at different or even far away places.

Reader S.J. Ravi Prakash, of S.V. Puram, heard of some of his friends trying to form a company *ad interim*. He wants to know what the expression "ad interim" means. It simply means, for the meantime, so as to indicate that the company is only a temporary measure till it is properly registered with the government. During the time of Reformation (16th century), the German emperor used to issue edicts concerning religious and ecclesiastical (relating to the church) matters. It was, however, left to the general council, which had representatives of all sections of society, to approve of the regulations. Till then, the edicts had only a temporary importance, like the Augsburg Interim of 1548.



Holi' in Maninagar, once upon a time, was not a one-day affair. Festivities lasting almost a month culminated in this most colourful finale, to mark the beginning of the season of spring when the entire world as it were basked in glorious sunshine. And for the people of north-eastern India, Maninagar was their 'entire' world and each one of them lived to make that little world of theirs the happiest, most peaceful kingdom in that region.

Raja Pratapavarma was an ideal king. He had ascended the

throne when he was very young. Not that his father, the reigning king, was ill or was tired of governing. But he watched, much to his delight and satisfaction, how his son had shaped himself as a capable successor. The king, therefore, decided to abdicate the throne and crown Pratapavarma as king when he was still young, so that Maninagar would enjoy a long reign by an able ruler. He knew that the kingdom was now secure in safer hands.

Within a few years of his ascension, Pratapavarma proved himself a worthy successor to





Raja Pushyavarma, and before long he became very popular with his subjects. He also saw to it that Maninagar maintained friendly relations with all the neighbouring kingdoms. It had, thus, no occasion to defend itself or go to war with anyone.

As the kingdom enjoyed peace and tranquillity, the people gave themselves up to entertainment whenever an occasion arose. They never missed the month-long revelry ending in Holi. They organised various contests and competitions amongst themselves, and the

king encouraged them by watching many of the events with his entourage and giving away the prizes himself on a day prior to Holi. All these programmes went on uninterruptedly for several years because there was peace all over the kingdom.

It was the twenty-fifth year of Pratapavarma's rule, and the celebrations started with the annual Holi festivities, when all the competitions to test one's physical fitness, strength, and bravery would be gone through. These were to be followed by contests in music, dance, painting, and other arts. Then there was to be a 'sadas' in which the intellectuals in the kingdom would participate. Invitations had been sent out to the neighbouring kingdoms to send participants to these events.

One of them stood apart every body else, especially in sports and games. Thangal was first noticed when he was declared the winner in Mukna. That year, the wrestling bouts were really tough. He was then seen leading a six-member team in Lakpi—a kind of football played in those regions in olden times, using a



dry coconut for the ball. His team won. When the same team played Kanjei with cane sticks, who the victors would be was only predictable. That year, a new game was introduced, in which one had to hit a ball with a stick held in the hand while riding a pony. Though a new game, the young man appeared to be quite an adept. When the result was announced, it did not come as a surprise to the people, who had been watching his dexterous moves and action, exhibiting complete control of his mount. The audience stood up and cheered him loudly.

Though he was seen in action on many days, participating in several events, he was a stranger to Maninagar. After handing him the prizes he had won, Raja Pratapavarma asked him. "What's your name, young man? Where do you come from?"

"I'm called Thangal, Your Majesty," he replied in a humble voice. Turning round as if to introduce his team, he added, "We all belong to the Tanghul tribe near the Nung Mai hills. We're participating in the games here for the first time, Your Majesty."

One of his team-mates was

holding a bunch of flowers. Thangal took them from him and moving over to Princess Priyamvada seated on one side of the king, he handed the bunch to her saying, "Your Highness, we've been told that you love flowers. Please accept these as a humble gift from us." He bowed to her once again, before leaving the royal presence along with his team.

"Such beautiful flowers! We don't have these in the palace garden, father," remarked Priyamvada.

The Raja smiled and nodded. "Yes, darling, they look very pretty. I, too, haven't seen them earlier. We must grow them in our garden."

By then more prizewinners had lined up in front of them to receive their prizes from the royal hands. After all the prizes had been distributed, the Commander of the Maninagar army, Ghambhir Singh, stood up. "Your Majesty, that brings the contests to an end. The people are now waiting for your announcement."

Raja Pratapavarma rose in his seat. The people all around the open arena waited with bated





breath to listen to their beloved king, though they could almost guess what he was going to tell them. However, for them there was a special significance if the word came from him.

"My beloved subjects!" the Raja addressed them. "I'm very pleased with the way the sports and games have been conducted. I'm particularly happy that you've introduced a new game to mark the twenty-fifth year of my ascension to the throne. As it is not being played in any other kingdom in this vast continent, I've decided to give it a name. It

shall be known as Mai-pula, which will remind you of the Nung Mai hills from where the victorious team has come.

"It should please all of us to know that our tribal brethren from Nung Mai have kept themselves in fine fettle. We should be proud of them, and I'm happy to announce that henceforth our army will have a place for them. I want our young friends here to convey this piece of information to their chief and to their brothers. I commend the healthy competition you've all exhibited while participating in the various competitions. Such healthy rivalry will help you attain heights of perfection.

"My beloved subjects, you've toiled for almost a month to make these events a great success. I now commend you to celebrate tomorrow's Holi in a grand manner! The palace gates will remain open throughout the day for you to come and play Holi with me and the royal household. May Mother Lairembi bless of all us!"

The thousands of people in the arena gave vent to their joy and cheered the king. "Long live Raja



Pratapavarma! May Mother Lairembi shower her blessings on our beloved king! May Maninagar enjoy everlasting peace!" They waited till the Raja and his entourage left the place, to return to their own homes and get ready for day-long revelry the next day.

Raja Pratapavarma and Princess Priyamvada left in a procession. They went in two separate open horse-drawn carriages, the king and the army commander in one, and the princess and two of her maids in the other. People lined up the streets on both sides to have a closer view of them and to cheer them. The maid sitting next to Priyamvada was now holding the bunch of flowers, and the princess could be seen admiring the flowers every now and then.

As soon as she reached her chambers, she asked the maids to fetch her a tall flower vase and, when it was brought, she herself arranged the flowers. In the vase, they seemed to have acquired a greater beauty.

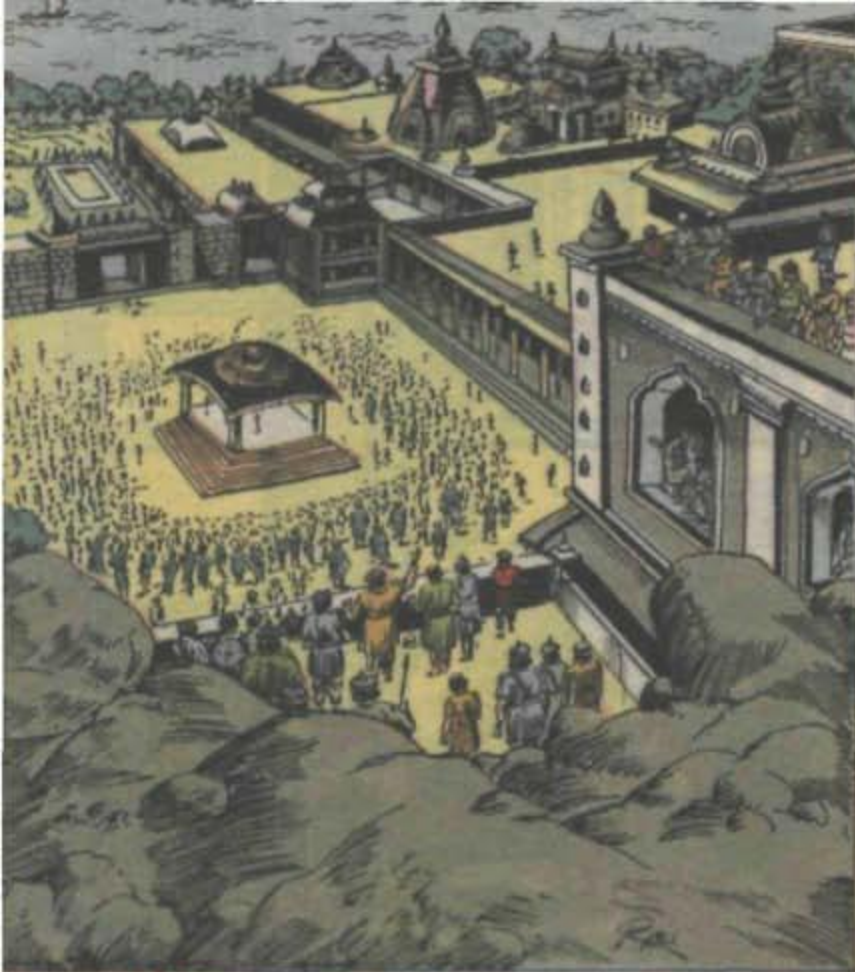
Holi dawned bright and clear, and the shouts and cries of joy from the revellers rose from every nook and corner of the capital.



Many of them took the king at his word and made their way to the palace, where the Raja, the princess, and other members of the royal household came out at frequent intervals to greet the revellers and join them in splashing coloured water or throwing coloured powder on them. They made good use of the opportunity, for, on what other occasion could they feel that the king and his subjects were equals?

Pratapavarma did not forget the flowers and the extraordinary gesture on the part of the tribal team, especially of their young





leader, Thangal. Though tribals, they had shown that they, too, had a culture, and the king decided then and there that he would visit the Nung Mai hills and the surrounding areas to find more about their life and welfare.

"Ghambhir," he told the army commander, after they had had *their* share of Holi revelry, "Priyamvada has reminded me about those flowers. Send someone to the Tanghuls and find out from that young man what kind of flowers they are, and how a sapling can be obtained for the palace garden. Whoever is going

may come here and take a look at the flowers."

"I shall select two competent persons to go to Nung Mai and get all the details from the tribe, your majesty," said Ghambhir Singh. "Of course, they will first search out Thangal."

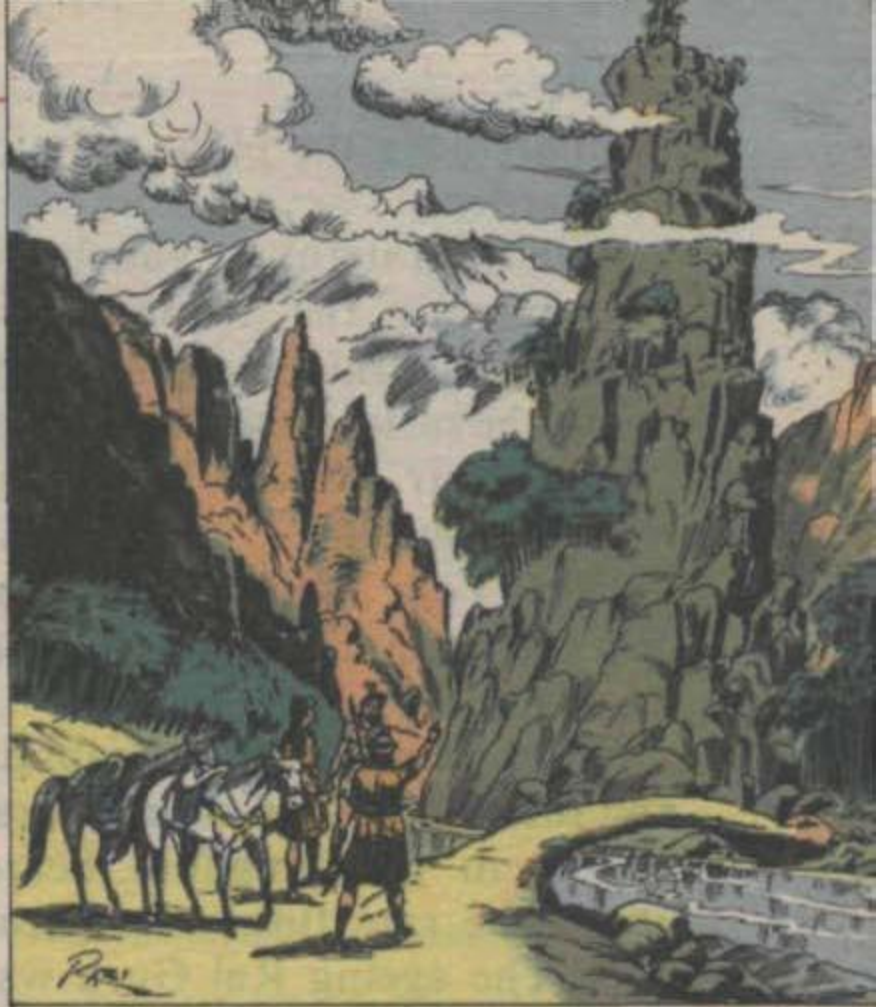
The next day, Ghambhir Singh took one of his captains and a soldier to the palace, so that they could have a close look at the flowers. They were led to the apartments used by the princess. They, too, were carried away by the beauty of the flowers. "It'll be easy to identify the flowers, sir," said the captain to his commander. "We should be able to come back soon with a sapling, princess," they said, turning to Princess Priyamvada.

One week passed, and then another. The captain and the soldier who had accompanied him were yet to return from the Nung Mai hills. The princess was now getting impatient. However, what comforted her was the fact that the exotic flowers in the vase had not withered away all these days. They remained as fresh as they were given to her by the tribal youth.



Towards the close of the third week, the captain and his escort returned—with another bunch of flowers, but no sapling. Ghambhir Singh took them to the palace to meet the king and the princess. “Here are some more flowers for you, princess,” said the Commander, handing the bunch to her. There was a wide smile on her face which then brightened up.

Ghambhir Singh now turned to the king. “Your majesty, my captain says there was no sapling available. He met the youth, Thangal, who led him to some inaccessible corners of the hills. And among a pile of huge rocks, they found a cluster of trees with the flowers. They were right on top of the trees, and as they are so tall, it was really hazardous to climb them. The tribals call the flower ‘Shatabdika’, and it appears they themselves are seeing them for the first time. They remember to have heard from their forefathers that these flowers bloom only once in hundred years, and that new shoots sprout a year or two after the flowers start appearing on top of the tall trees, which grow in a cluster. It was with great



difficulty that a tree was cut for the flowers. The captain did not want to disappoint our princess.”

Both Pratapavarma and Priyamvada listened to these details in rapt attention. “Quite interesting, Ghambhir,” remarked the Raja. “Priyamvada, we shall wait till the new shoot comes up and then arrange for a sapling for our garden.”

“Did you say a hundred years, captain?” asked the princess. There was a trace of despair in her voice. “I may not live that long to see the flowers in *our* garden, father! Whatever that be,



we must have the plant grow in our garden."

"We're grateful to you both, captain, for the trouble you took," said Prâtapavarma, turning to the officer and the soldier. "Chambhir, they must be rewarded suitably."

"Yes, Your Majesty," responded the Commander, as he led the two away.

Word passed from the captain and the soldier, and soon several people in the kingdom heard about the rare flower from the hills. The ageing Raj Guru was among them. A very learned person, Gourinath had been in the service of the royal family of Maninagar for more than sixty years. He was, one evening, poring over some ancient texts in his quiet library, when the name 'Shatabdika' rang a bell in him.

He hurriedly got up and sent a messenger to the king to tell him that he would soon reach the palace to meet the Raja on an urgent matter.

The Raj Guru at this late hour? Prâtapavarma wondered when the message reached him. He knew, the purpose of his visit must be very important. He kept himself ready to receive Guru Gourinath. As soon as he arrived, he prostrated before him and led him by the hand to his chambers. "What's it, O revered Guru?" the king asked him the moment he saw him seated.

"This flower, Shatabdika, forebodes evil, my son!" the Raj Guru came straight to the point.

"Evil?" the king merely repeated the word, not wanting to believe his ears.

—To continue





LET US KNOW

What is the meaning of INRI inscribed on the cross on which Christ took his last breath?

—Kshyamanidhi Senapati, Padampur

The expansion of the abbreviation is 'Jesus Nazarene Rex Judaeorum', which means Jesus of Nazareth, king of the Jews. In the Hebrew language, the letter 'J' had the form of 'I'.

Why is Alexander called the Great? Why not Emperor Asoka?

—Laxmidhar Gahan, Balasore

Alexander, the King of Macedonia (356-323 B.C.) set out on his conquests and conquered the Persian Empire of those days, by defeating Darius in 333 B.C. He overran Persia once again in 331 B.C. on his way to the Indus and the country lying beyond that river. To the historians, mostly of the West, all these were feats beyond their imagination and so they called him "the Great". It was the same historians who gave such fancy titles as Ethelred 'the Unready' and Richard 'the Lion-hearted'. Asoka (269-232 B.C.) *inherited* an empire and is remembered for his conquest of Kalinga and his decision not to wage another war and his conversion to and spread of Buddhism. We Indians consider him as equally great but for reasons other than conquests. Many more emperors had ruled the land in later years, but to none we gave any honorific.

Readers are welcome to send such queries on culture, literature or general knowledge which should be of interest to others too, for brief answers from the Chandamama.





PROMISE IS NO JOKE

Ramu and Somu, of Attur, were good friends. However, in character they were very different. While Ramu was helpful to others, Somu was not only unhelpful, but arrogant and jealous, too. Ramu easily endeared himself to the people; naturally, Somu was jealous of him, though he cleverly hid his feelings from Ramu. At the same time, he marked his time to catch him unawares. He began plotting to achieve his aim, and a chance came to him quite soon.

Ramu found a match for his daughter and began preparations for the wedding. It was then that he realised he was short of money to meet all the expenses. After all, wasn't Somu his close friend? he thought. He was certain Somu would go to his help and lend him whatever money he wanted.

Somu was just waiting for an opportunity like that. He feigned inability and regretfully told Ramu, "What a pity! It's only the other day that I sent back my fourth daughter with some money which my son-in-law needed very badly. I'm afraid, right now, I don't have anything to spare. I'm so sorry, Ramu. I hope you'll understand."

Ramu knew he could not approach anyone else. "You know very well, Somu, that I wouldn't go to anybody else for a loan. If I don't get that much money, the wedding may have to be called off. And if you'll help me, Somu, I shall be grateful, I'm even willing to make a pair of sandals for you with my skin. You must come to my rescue and give me a loan, please, Somu. I shall repay you with interest

within six months. It's a promise."

Somu appeared to be thinking for a while and his face brightened up as if he had found a way out to help his friend. "I just remembered, Ramu. My uncle had given me some money for safe-keeping for a few days. Maybe I can spare from it whatever you've asked for. You should go ahead and perform a decent marriage." He then went inside, brought the money, and gave it to Ramu.

The wedding was a grand affair. Ramu kept his word. In the sixth month, he repaid the loan with interest. "Ramu, it's all right you've returned the loan with interest. But you haven't kept your promise. Didn't you tell me that you would show me your gratitude by making a pair of sandals for me with your skin?" he asked, without any hesitation.

Ramu was taken aback for a moment. "What's this, Somu? Why do you want to pull my legs? I had said that only to assure you of my sincerity and gratitude. I had said that only to tell myself that I was under obligation to you. After all, people do say such

things, don't they, but does anybody take them seriously?" Ramu protested and pleaded.

"You're mistaken, Ramu," said Somu, putting on a serious face. "I didn't take it lightly at all. In fact, when I gave you that loan, I was expecting that you would express your gratitude in the way you yourself had promised. Now, you can't go back on your word."

Intentionally or not, Somu talked in a loud voice and soon a crowd collected to listen to their arguments. They tried to pacify Somu, but he would not budge a wee bit, all the time insisting that Ramu made a pair of sandals with the skin taken from his body. The people took pity on Ramu and reported the matter to the village chief.

Now this man, too, had taken a loan from Somu but had not repaid him and was, therefore, in a predicament. He knew, if he were to decide the matter in favour of Ramu, Somu might demand immediate repayment of the loan. So, he expressed his views which were in favour of Somu. Ramu had by then decided that he would make an appeal to the king himself.



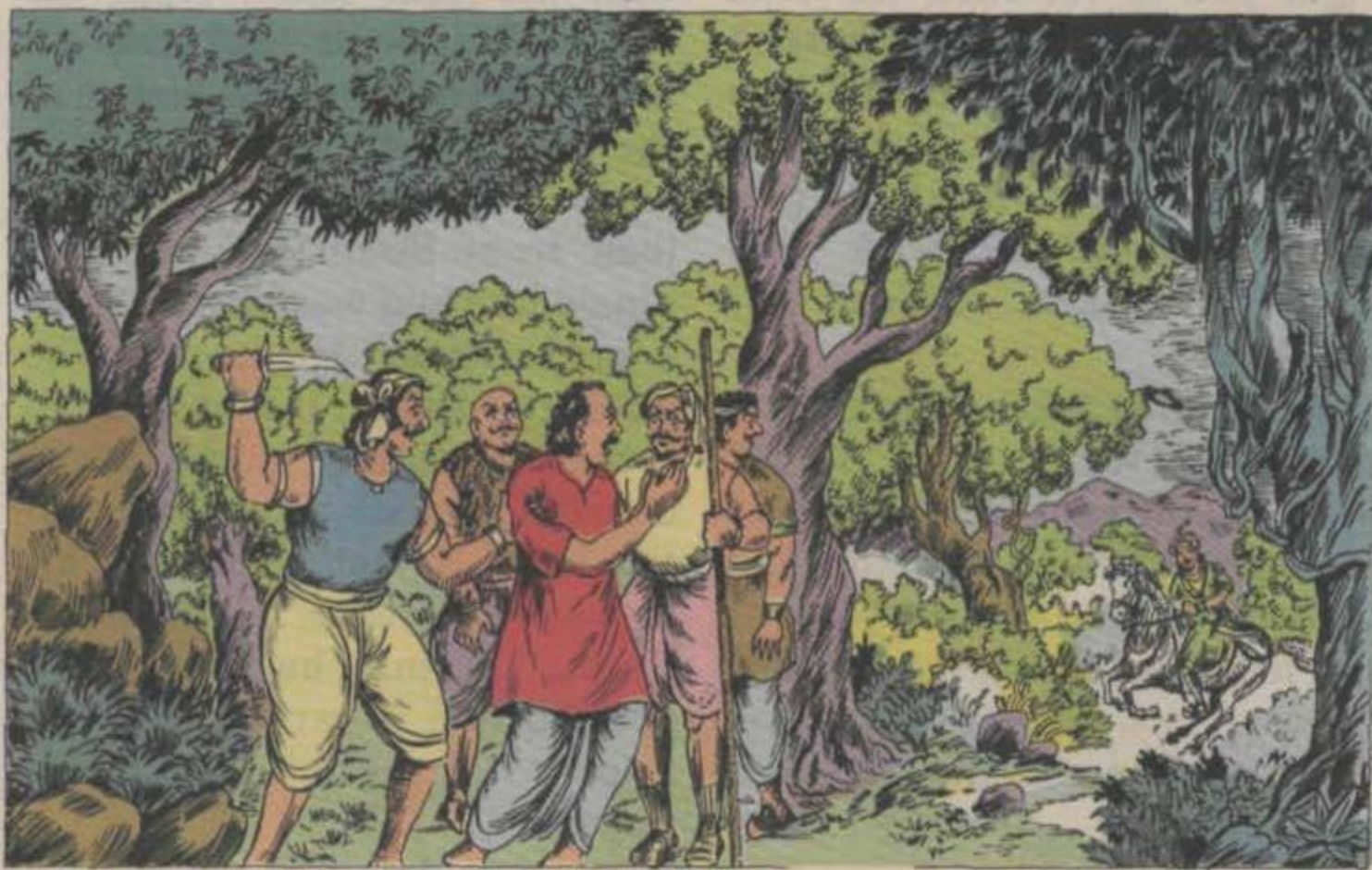
"I shall seek the king's verdict," he revealed his intention.

After Ramu had gone and met the king, he sent for Somu and got his version of the whole affair. "You may go now," said the king. "I shall give my verdict next week."

A couple of days later, Somu was proceeding to the capital on some errand. He had to cross a forest. While there, he was surrounded by dacoits who threatened to kill him if he would not part with the valuables he had on him. Luckily for him, just then the king happened to pass that way. "Your Majesty! Please save

me!" Somu cried aloud. "I shall be much obliged to you. I shall work for you like a dog all my life, also in my next rebirth, and the next, and..." The king rushed to his aid and the dacoits took to their heels. Somu fell at the king's feet and expressed his eternal gratitude.

On the seventh day, both Ramu and Somu were at the *darbar* to listen to the king's verdict. "Somu was only fair in insisting on Ramu keeping his promise," said the king. "Ramu, you've to keep your word, and arrange for a pair of sandals made from your own skin."



The people in the *darbar* and Ramu were shocked beyond belief. They never expected the king to be so unjust, for, he was well-known for his fair judgments. Then, how come he gave such a cruel decision today? they all wondered, and looked at each other. Ramu was downcast. He was expecting justice at least from the king.

"Ramu will now keep his word," the king assured Somu. "How about you? Won't you keep your word to me?"

Somu looked bewildered. "What word, Your Majesty?" he asked the king, doubtingly. "I

haven't given any promise to you, Your Majesty. I don't understand what you say!"

"Don't you remember what you said that day, when I saved you from those dacoits?" the king reminded him. "Didn't you say you would work for me like a dog in the present life and in the next six rebirths? Strange that you've forgotten your promise so fast!" said the king sarcastically.

"Oh! That!" said Somu, with a sigh of relief. "That's how people generally express their gratitude, Your Majesty. How can you insist that I kept that promise? It is not to be taken seriously, Your



Majesty!" he argued.

"What did you say, Somu?" said the king angrily. "Was it a joke or something? Mind you, you yourself want others to keep their promises. Wasn't it the reason for harassing this poor man and for dragging him to me for a decision? If you insist on his keeping his word, you must also keep your promise to me. There's no going back on that, I tell you, Somu. You may now draw as much of his skin as you want for making sandals for yourself, and the next moment you report for work—yes, to work like a dog as long as I wish! Justice and fairness are for everybody in equal measure."

The *darbar* rose like one man, to shower praises on the king and his wisdom and justice. Ramu heaved a sigh of relief. He was

certain that justice would be meted out to him.

It was now the turn of Somu to feel downcast. He realised that the king was trying to teach him a lesson. He felt ashamed of himself and fell at the king's feet pleading for mercy and pardon. "Please forgive me, O merciful king! I shall never repeat such a mistake. Please let me be free."

The king thought that Somu was, for once, sincere in his remorse. "Yes, Somu, I give you my pardon. But you must also seek forgiveness from Ramu."

Somu went up to Ramu, took his hands in his, and said, "Please forgive me, Ramu." Together they sought leave of the king to return home. Somu was no longer jealous of Ramu, and they continued to remain friends.



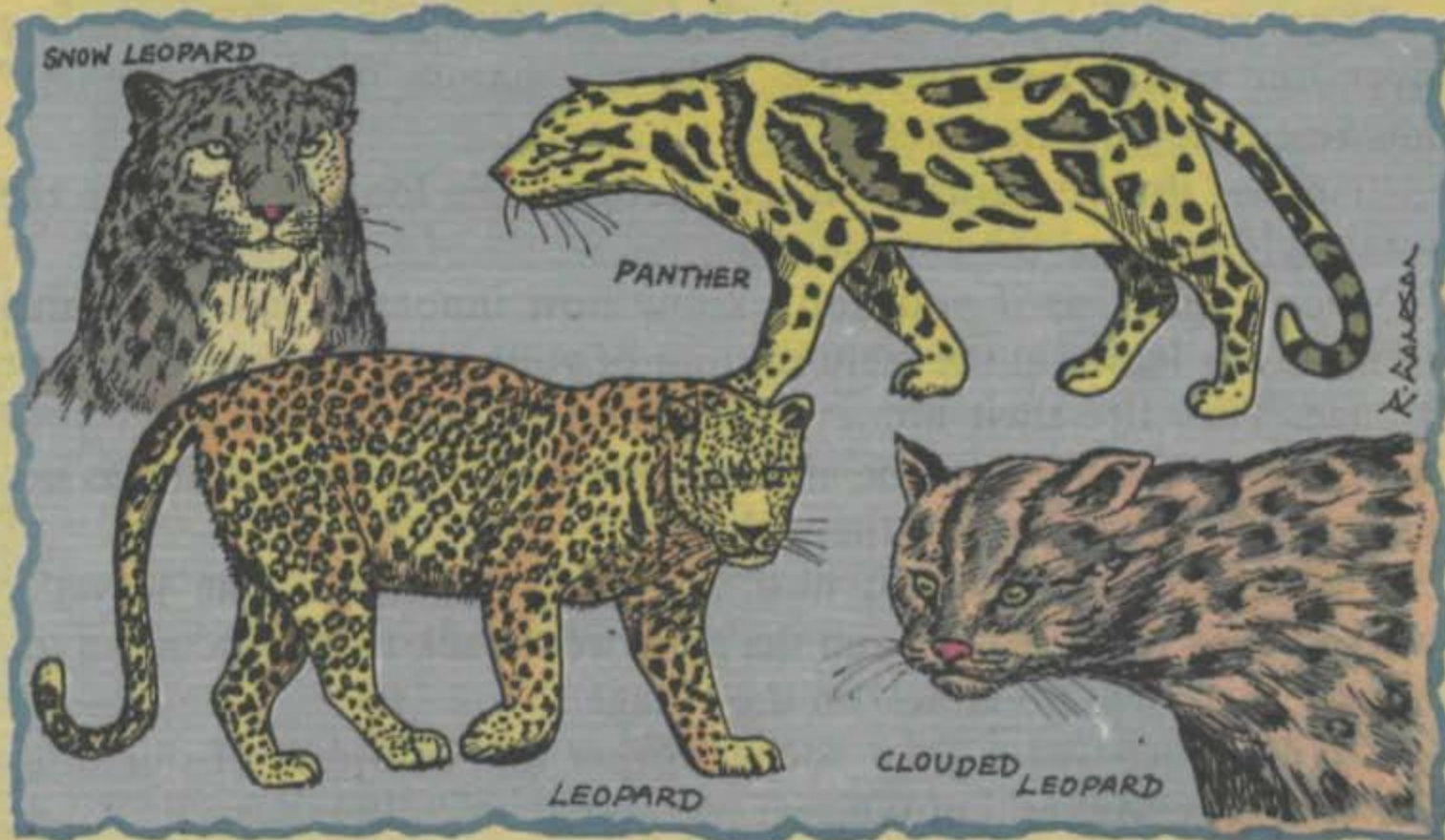
BIRDS AND ANIMALS OF INDIA

Cousins in the cat family !

Between them, there is only a 'spot' of difference, the **leopard** having almost circular spots, while the **panther's** spots are larger and uneven and has broken stripes on its face and neck and circular stripes on the tail. Like the tiger, they belong to the cat family, though smaller in size (200-215 cm). Both are yellowish in colour; a black leopard or panther is a rare occurrence. While the tiger population in India is dwindling, leopards and panthers seem to have escaped extinction and they are commonly seen all over the country. We even frequently hear of them straying into residential areas.

There are two separate varieties of leopard—the **clouded leopard** found in the foothills of the eastern Himalayan ranges, and the **snow leopard** living in the snow regions of the Himalayas. The latter is the most beautiful of the three and its stone-grey fur, with elongated black rings and spots, is a much prized item and the animal, therefore, is among the endangered species. The two varieties are smaller (100-110 cm) in size than the common leopard.

Folk tales call the cat the tiger's aunt who "taught it everything except to climb trees"! The leopard has, however, mastered that trick, though we don't know whether it learnt the art from the cat! The cheetah, extinct in Asia but still found in Africa, is a cousin of the leopard.





INDIA THROUGH HER LITERATURE

India is a great country which has nurtured so many languages and so many cultures through the ages. Each major language of India has a rich literature. We know more or less about the great books of the past. But we know little about the outstanding books of our own time. **Chandamama** has told you the stories of several novels of our age—in Hindi, Tamil, Bengali, Oriya, Kannada, Malayalam, and Marathi—with the hope that the brief narrations will inspire our readers to read the complete books in their original or in their full translation, in the future.

What we give you in this issue is the story not of a novel, but of true life, as interesting as a novel.

—Editor

THE EARTHEN LAMP

It was night and quite dark at that! A solitary traveller faced a gang of dacoits in the meadow. He had come to know that the gang was going to plunder a village.

“Halt—or I will shoot you dead!” shouted the leader of the gang. “Who are you?” he then asked.

“I am an outlaw, but one who fights the foreigners who are ruling over our motherland unjustly. I do not harass innocent people!” answered the lone traveller.

“Neither do we harass innocent people! We loot or kill only the wealthy!” asserted the gang leader.

“Don’t speak as if you don’t know how innocent, poor peasants tremble like leaves at the mere rumour of your gang approaching their village. They flee their homes. They can’t till their lands. After your gang leaves, the police come and they are troubled again. If this is not harassment of the people, then what is?”

The argument continued until the gang fell silent. The traveller walked back to the village and the gang went back to its hideout in the forest. There was no attack on the village.

The traveller was a great social worker and reformer of our time, Ravishankar Maharaj of Gujarat.

Way back in 1927, many villagers believed that Maharaj could walk on the surface of water during a flood! That meant, he was so prompt in reaching the marooned people that it would not have been possible unless one could walk in that miraculous manner!

Indeed, the villagers had more than one reason to believe that Maharaj was a man of miracles. Otherwise how would two ferocious bulls behave like pets before him?

Maharaj perhaps loved man and beast equally. At least he did not reject any man even if the man was beastly in the eyes of others. He tried to understand with sympathy the mind of even the worst criminal.



He must have been amused, but not annoyed, when a thief told him that Lakshmi, the goddess of Wealth, "longed to be liberated" from a wealthy hoarder's house and the thief could hear the cry of the goddess from miles away and that was why he burgled the house!

Mansai-na-Diva (The Earthen Lamp) in Gujarati, the life story of Ravishankar Maharaj who died a few years ago after crossing a century of age, reads like charming fiction. His life was full of such adventures! The author, Jhaverchand Meghani (1897-1947) was an eminent Gujarati writer, and author of several novels, plays, short stories, and poems.

DO YOU KNOW?

1. Which river flows by the side of the Taj Mahal?
2. Which Indian State sends the maximum number of members to the Lok Sabha?
3. Which bird is symbolic of love and peace?
4. Which is the largest animal to live on earth?
5. Which State in India is associated with the Kuchipudi style of dancing?
6. Who is generally referred to as 'the light of the world'?
7. The Karakoram Highway links two countries. Which are they?
8. Who is the god of Fire in Indian mythology?
9. China's capital is Beijing. Which is the largest city in that country?
10. Who is the inventor of safety lifts in buildings?
11. Which country produces silver the most?
12. Which Negro leader of the U.S.A. was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize?
13. Where is the Eiffel Tower located?
14. How was the city of Istanbul in Turkey known earlier?
15. When Britain agreed to grant independence to India, who was the Prime Minister there?
16. Who is known as the father of geometry?
17. Which language is spoken in Chile in South America?
18. The flag of a country is plain white. Which country?
19. Where did modern banking originate?
20. Who first thought of fixing locks on doors and using keys to open them?

ANSWERS

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Yamuna | 11. Mexico |
| 2. Uttar Pradesh | 12. Martin Luther King |
| 3. Dove | 13. Paris, the capital of France |
| 4. Blue Whale | 14. Constantinople |
| 5. Andhra Pradesh | 15. Clement Attlee |
| 6. Jesus Christ | 16. Euclid |
| 7. Pakistan and China | 17. Spanish |
| 8. Agni | 18. Western Sahara |
| 9. Shanghai | 19. Italy |
| 10. Elisha Otis | 20. Egyptians |



THE HIDDEN LUCK

There once lived a very, very lazy man. Abdulla was his name. All day long he lay in the sunshine, gazing at the blue sky. No doubt his small family went hungry most of the time. Often his wife would chide him, "It's high time you took up some work. How do you think we will survive in this manner?"

"Don't you worry, dear. We are poor and sad now, but soon we shall be rich and happy. Have patience and wait," he would always reply to her and doze off to sleep.

So the wife waited, their children waited, and the lazy man, too, waited. But alas, nothing happened, and they remained as poor as ever and their stomachs gnawed ever loudly.

"If we were to wait any longer, we will soon starve to death!" said the wife one day and she began to weep.

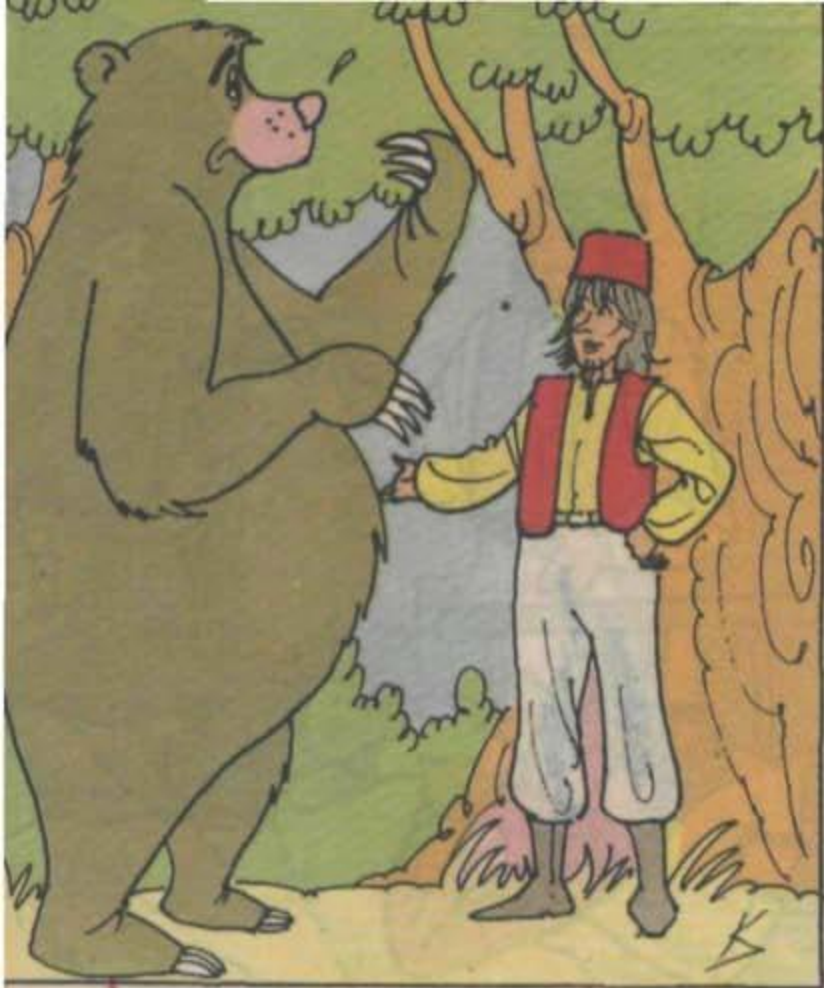
So, with great effort indeed, Abdulla lifted his hand and



scratched his head. 'I'll go to the sage who dwells in the forest and ask for his advice. He'll surely teach me how to stop being poor,' he thought.

The next morning, Abdulla's wife could not believe her eyes when she saw her husband out of his bed well before the cock's crow. Soon he set off. For several arduous days and nights he walked, deeper and deeper into the woods. At last, he came across a grizzly bear.

"Where are you going, my good man, far away from the village?" asked the bear.



*"I'm off to meet the wise sage,
All wrinkled and white with age.
To learn how to be rich in life,
Without any effort or strife,"*
sang Abdulla while performing a dancing step.

"Dear Friend, perhaps he could give me the cure for my sleeplessness too," said the bear.

"All right, I'll ask him about it," he replied and continued on his way.

For another two days and nights he trod on the winding path. He soon came to a cherry tree and rested awhile under its shade.

"O weary traveller, where are you going?" asked the tree swaying one of its branches.

*"I'm off to meet the wise sage,
All wrinkled and white with age.
To learn how to be rich in life,
Without any effort or strife,"* said Abdulla in one sing-song breath.

"Friend, for the last four Springs, flowers do not blossom on me nor do I bear any fruit. Surely, the wise man will know what is wrong," said the tree.

"Okay, I'll ask him about it," assured Abdulla.

He walked for another couple of days and nights. For, the humble dwelling of the great sage stood very deep in the forest. He felt thirsty and stopped by a stream. Suddenly, a large fish thrust its head out of the water.

"Where are you heading for through this wilderness?" asked the fish.

Abdulla once again repeated his refrain.

"O kind man," said the fish, "could you please ask the wise one how to get rid of the nagging pain in my belly?"

"Very well, I'll enquire about it," he replied and hurried away.

At last, after several weary



days and nights he reached his destination.

Under the great Oak, just outside his small hut, sat the wise old man. He looked more than hundred years, his long grey beard flowing down upto the ground. All around him frolicked wee little denizens of the woods, but he sat undisturbed, eyes closed in meditation. Slowly, he opened them, as if he knew that someone had come to meet him.

"What can I do for you?" he asked calmly.

Abdulla explained the purpose of his visit.

"Is that all?" asked the wise one.

Abdulla then told him what the bear, the cherry tree, and the fish wanted to know.

Said the wise man: "When the rare pearl that lodges in the fish's stomach is removed, it will find relief."

"And the cherry-tree?"

"Under the ground, entangled in the roots, lies a golden chest. When it is dug out, the tree will blossom and bear fruit once again," replied the sage.

"And what about the bear's insomnia, O good Soul?" he



asked.

"Well, he has but to box the ears of the first fool he comes across," replied the old man.

"O revered Sir, what about me? How am I to stop being poor?" asked Abdulla.

"But, hasn't your wish been already granted?" replied the sage.

"Is that so? Has it been granted?" he asked excitedly.

But, by then, the sage had closed his eyes once again.

Abdulla's joy knew no bounds. He trod homewards chuckling to himself. Soon he reached the



finger,” said Abdulla and he resumed walking.

He reached the cherry-tree and at his sight all its branches began to sway and its leaves rustled.

“Has the wise man given any solution to my problem?” asked the tree.

“A golden chest lies buried under you. The moment it is unearthed, you’ll once again blossom and bear fruit,” he replied.

“Please, dear friend,” implored the cherry-tree, “will you dig out the chest, for me? You’ll be helping me and helping yourself, too!”

“Why should I bother, when the wise man has assured me that I shall be rich anyway?” replied Abdulla bidding the tree good-bye.

Finally, he met the grizzly bear. “Ah, Mister, what news have you brought for me?” asked the anxious beast.

“Box the ears of the first fool who comes your way and you’ll be cured,” said Abdulla rather hesitantly.

“Fine. Will you kindly tell me a little more about your adventure?” asked the happy bear.

stream and stopped to have a gulp of its clear sweet water.

“Has the wise man prescribed some cure for me?” asked the fish.

“You have just to take out the rare pearl that is lodged in your stomach and all will be well with you,” he replied.

“Friend, do help me and take it out. You will not only relieve me of my pain but also would possess the rare pearl,” said the fish.

“Oh no. My wish has already been granted. I will be rich anyway without moving my little



Very proudly indeed Abdulla related all that had passed and about his encounters with the fish and the cherry tree.

"But I just did not at all bother about their pleadings," he concluded, sounding clever. "For I'll be rich anyway!"

"Is that so?" said the bear with a big smile. "But as for myself, I need not go very far. For the greatest fool the world could ever know stands right in front of me!"

The bear at once held Abdulla in a tight hug with one hand and with the other, began to box his ears black and blue.

"Oh, oh, oh... I've.... I've understood! I've..."

The bear left Abdulla and said, "You're indeed lucky if you have

understood!"

The first thing Abdulla did thereafter was to go back and meet the cherry tree and the fish. On his way back home, along with the golden chest and the rare pearl, he came across the grizzly bear, fast asleep, snoring blissfully. He was quietly passing by when the bear woke up and said, "Avoiding me, eh? But am I not your true friend?"

Abdulla stopped, turned back, smiled, and saluted the bear and said, "Indeed, you are! What a fool I am!"

"No, say what a fool you were! With the rare pearl and the golden chest, you are no longer what you were!"

—Retold by Anup Kishore Das



WORLD OF NATURE

The green in grass



The word grass immediately brings to our mind the colour green. The green in grass as well as other plants—tree leaves for example—is caused by the presence of chloroplasts which themselves contain four other substances. They are *chlorophyll* which is blue-green, *chlorophyll b* which is yellow-green, *xanthophyll* which is yellow, and *carotene* which is orange in colour. These substances are responsible for the colour changes in grass and leaves, from one season to

another season, from a light green early in spring to a dark green during winter.

The chameleon's many colours

Nature has provided many creatures with a valuable device to protect them from their enemies. This is their ability to change colour and blend perfectly with their background. The best known 'colour change artist' is the chameleon. The colour change is possible because of the special cells in the skin called chromatophores or colour-bearers. Each of




these little star-shaped cells contains one colour pigment, and usually there will be cells with three different colour pigments. When combined, they give to the creature a wide range of possible colours—like green resulting from a combination of blue and yellow, orange from yellow and red, or brown from blue and red.

Brown at birth



Very few birds have just one colour all over—like the common crow. The Scarlet Ibis of Trinidad is another. It is the most graceful and beautiful member of a spectacular family of birds, which includes the spoonbills. The ibises have fossil records that date back 60 million years. The ancient Egyptians venerated the sacred ibis as the scribe of the gods whose duty it was to record the story of human beings! Strangely, at birth the young ones are brown. Their plumage turns grey, then white and rose, before the adult 'matures' to a rich scarlet.

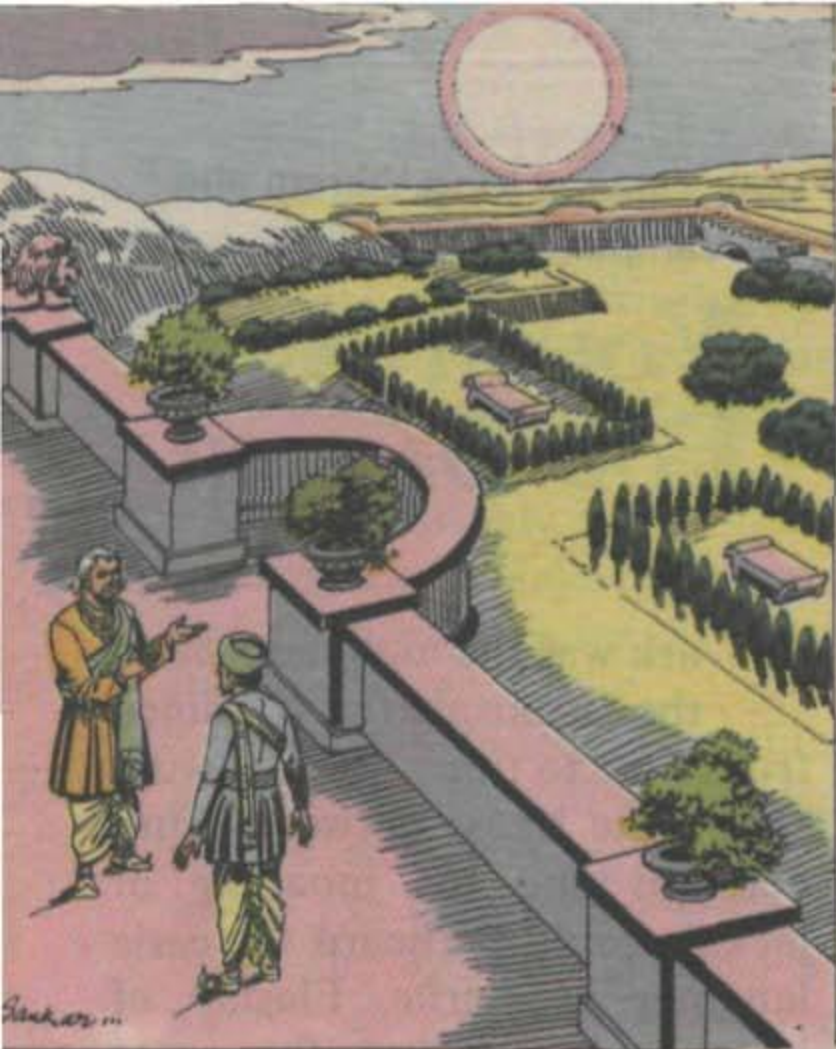


New Tales of King Vikram and
the Vampire

YOUTH NOT FOR BARTER

Dark was the night and weird the atmosphere. It rained from time to time; gusts of wind shook the trees. Between thunderclaps and the moaning of jackals could be heard the eerie laughter of spirits. Flashes of lightning revealed fearsome faces.

But King Vikramaditya did not swerve a bit. He climbed the ancient tree once again and brought down the corpse. However, as soon as he began crossing the desolate cremation ground, with the corpse lying on his shoulder, the vampire that possessed the corpse spoke: "O King, you seem to be making untiring efforts and without respite as if you wish to achieve something. I pity you; instead of enjoying a comfortable sleep on a cozy bed, you're still coming after me. You seem to be quite ada-



mant. I'm reminded of King Veerasen. He challenged Death itself and wanted to live as long as he wished. When he knew that he would have to submit to Destiny, he left his kingdom, took to *sanyas*, and became a hermit. I think you should listen to his story."

The vampire then narrated the story of King Veerasen of Vikrampur. Even after several years of married life, he was not blessed with a child. The king, who was becoming old and older as the years went by, was worried that there was no one to succeed him

and whatever he had built up, whatever riches he had made, would all go to waste without anyone to inherit them.

One full moon night, the king was on the terrace of his palace talking to his chief minister. As he walked up and down the terrace, he noticed the bright moonlight and drew the attention of the minister. "See how the moonlight has turned the trees, the river, and the mountains, even the sand dunes, into a lovely sight! I was yearning for a long life just to have the pleasure of watching all this beauty for ever and for ever. The thought that I might have to leave everything soon when I am no more overtakes me so much that I'm afraid I may die even sooner. What's the use of power, position, and wealth? None of that will be able to prevent my death!" Veerasen took a deep sigh.

The minister was upset by the king's worry about his last days. After all death is only natural and inevitable. Birth has one day to be followed by death. Nobody can prevent or resist death, irrespective of whether a person is great or not. Even a victor is vanquished by death. The minis-



ter knew that an argument or a consolation would not serve any purpose. So, he kept quiet.

Both of them did not notice a flower falling down from the skies. It hit Veerasen before it fell on the terrace. The king picked it up, and smelt it. "Ah! what a beautiful smell it has! Wonder what kind of flower this is!" the king remarked.

"I wouldn't know it myself, your majesty!" said the minister. "Perhaps it fell from an enchantress of the heavens as she travelled through the skies. We shall ask our *pundits* in the court tomorrow."

Next day, the king showed the flower to the *pundits*. They looked at the flower, then exchanged glances amongst themselves, but nobody came out with an answer, till the royal *pundit* opened his eyes after some deep thought and said, "Your majesty, if I'm not mistaken, this is called Amritavardhini and it is a favourite of all divine enchantresses who like to adorn their hair with at least one of these. I'm told this flower has a special property. It can grant youth to an old person. If a young man or woman wishes to make an old



person as young as himself or herself, he or she has only to hold the flower in the hand and pray. The person will become young and the young man or woman will, in turn, lose his or her youth. There are some treatises which make mention of this special power of the flower."

King Veerasen was now very happy. He turned to the chief minister and said, "You may make an announcement that whoever is willing to transfer his or her youth to me will get half of my kingdom." The announcement was duly made from all



public places and from street corners, but no one came forward to part with his youth.

The king waited for several days. He then ordered his minister to go and search for young men, promising them more incentives. The chief minister went round the entire kingdom and heaved a sigh of relief when he at last came upon two young men. One of them was blind, and the other had an ugly face. Both of them earned their livelihood by begging for alms.

The minister disclosed to them his mission. "Would either of you accept the king's offer? Would you exchange your youth for the king's old age? I'm sure one of you will be keen to own half of the kingdom!" Much to his surprise, neither of them was willing to accept the attractive offer!

"No, sir, we don't want the kingdom. Nor would we wish to become old. We're happy to lead the life of beggars," both of them said in unison.

The chief minister went back to the king and related all that had happened. Both of them were surprised beyond belief, that even beggars were reluctant

to part with their youth.

A few days later, a robber was brought before the king for trial. Veerappa had been caught for the first time. "What have you to say in your defence?" asked Veerasen. "Remember, the punishment for your crime will be stringent."

"I confess to my crime, your majesty," said Veerappa most humbly. "But, I go and rob only those who fleece innocent people. And whatever I take from them is given away to the poor. I take care not to rob or cause any harm to woman. I've not killed anybody, even when there was a threat to my life. You may find out from the people the truth of what I said."

The king noticed the innocence on the face of Veerappa, and believed all that he had said in his defence. At the same time, he had confessed to his crime and, therefore, he had to be given some punishment. The king asked Veerappa to be taken away to await his punishment.

It was then that the chief minister was struck with an idea. "Your majesty, he's a young man. Instead of punishing him in the usual way, why shouldn't we



make him part with his youth in exchange for his liberty? It'll be a lesson to other criminals as well! If you'll permit me, I shall go and make the offer to him." The king nodded in agreement.

The chief minister went to the prison and met Veerappa. "You know what the stringent punishment would be. Nothing less than death by hanging. But..."

The minister was cut short by Veerappa. "I know what you want to tell me, sir. You want me to give up my youth for the king? And that'll be the only way I can get my freedom?"

"You've guessed correctly,

Veerappa," said the minister "Do you accept the offer?"

Veerappa laughed aloud. "If the king had sincerely pardoned me or even given me whatever punishment is due, I would have complimented him for being honest. I had a high opinion of him. From the moment I heard the announcement, I had a wish to give him my youth and deliberately gave myself up to his soldiers. I thought, once he became young, he would continue his good governance. But now I'm thoroughly disappointed. He wants to make use of me for his selfish ends. That does





not behove of a king. So, I've decided not to part with my youth."

The minister was angry when he heard all this from Veerappa. "You're arrogant, Veerappa. You deserve nothing less than the death sentence!"

"I'm not afraid of dying, sir!" Veerappa shouted as the minister was going out of the lock-up. "My youth is not for barter!"

King Veerasen was stunned when he was told of Veerappa's response to the offer. He hung his head in shame, and fell silent for a long while. He then asked for

Veerappa. As soon as he was brought before him, Veerasen got down from the throne and went and embraced Veerappa. "You've opened my eyes, Veerappa. You're like any wise sage. The lesson you've taught me as I stand on the threshold of my last days is something great. There's none to take over from me when I'm dead and gone. Everybody knows that I don't have a son to succeed me. But today I've found a son. I'm handing over the kingdom to you even now. You'll be the ruler of Vikrampur from tomorrow. I've decided to go to the forest, take *sanyas*, and sit in *tapas*." King Veerasen did just that. After Veerappa ascended the throne, he retired to the forest.

The vampire concluded the story there and turned to King Vikramaditya. "Was it a wise act of the king or had he become senile as he grew old? He called a mere robber a wise sage; then he called him his son and entrusted the entire kingdom to him. Wasn't it foolish of the king? He not only handed over the reins to a robber, but left the kingdom for the forest. Don't you think all



this was very unwise on his part? It you know the answers to my questions and yet refuse to satisfy me, mind you, your head will be blown to pieces!"

Vikramaditya, as usual, had a ready answer. "If one thinks deep, it will be found that what the king did was something wise. Sometimes, even *pundits* advise things not possible or plausible. There are times when fools may also act wise. King Veerasen was blind for a while. That was when he was afraid of death. But when he saw how brave the robber was even when he was threatened with death, the king realised his folly. That's how he came to call the robber a wise sage, when he saw him frank, intelligent, and clever. There was nothing wrong in the king being prompted to call

him a sage. But a crime is a crime, whoever commits it. And Veerasen really wanted to punish Veerappa for the crime he committed. But the robber questioned his honesty and sincerity. The king then realised his own failings and weaknesses and decided that the wise robber would reign well and take care of the kingdom. He also came to the conclusion that none can prevent death, and he decided to spend the rest of his life in meditation and prepare himself for that eventuality."

The vampire saw that King Vikramaditya had been too smart for him. He flew back to the ancient tree carrying the corpse along with him. Vikramaditya drew his sword and went after the vampire.



Sports Snippets

Distinction at Calcutta

Cricket history was made in Calcutta where the first Test between England and India was played from January 29. For the skipper of the visiting team, Graham Gooch, it was his 100th Test appearance. "I did not think I would get this far!" he told the Press, adding this was his last overseas tour. Four more Englishmen have the distinction of playing in 100 or more tests: David Gower (117), Colin Cowdrey (114), Geoff Boycott



(108), and Ian Botham (102).

Test debut was made by Vinod Kambli and Rajesh Chouhan, who became India's 197th and 198th Test

cricketers so far. It was a Test cap of a different nature for former Indian captain S. Venkataraghavan. After becoming a first class umpire 3 years ago, he officiated for the first Test at Calcutta, which also made Paul Taylor the 557th Test cap for England.

Incidentally, it was at Calcutta that India's captain, Azharuddin, began his Test career when he hit a brilliant 'ton' in 1984.

Milestone for Kapil

India's all-rounder Kapil Dev is the first player in cricket history to score over 5,000 runs and take more than 400 wickets in Test matches. While playing his 122nd Test and 176th innings in Madras on February 12, he reached the 5,000 mark when he was on 35. He is the fourth Indian to get this distinction, the others being Gavaskar (10,122 in 125 Tests), Vengsarkar (6,868-116) and G.R. Visvanath (6,080-91). The 413 wickets Kapil already has in his account make him the best all-rounder in the world. He has another unique achievement—the fastest Test century for any Indian batsman. This he made when he scored 100 from 74 balls at Kanpur in the 1986-87 series against Sri Lanka.

Nine victims at one go!

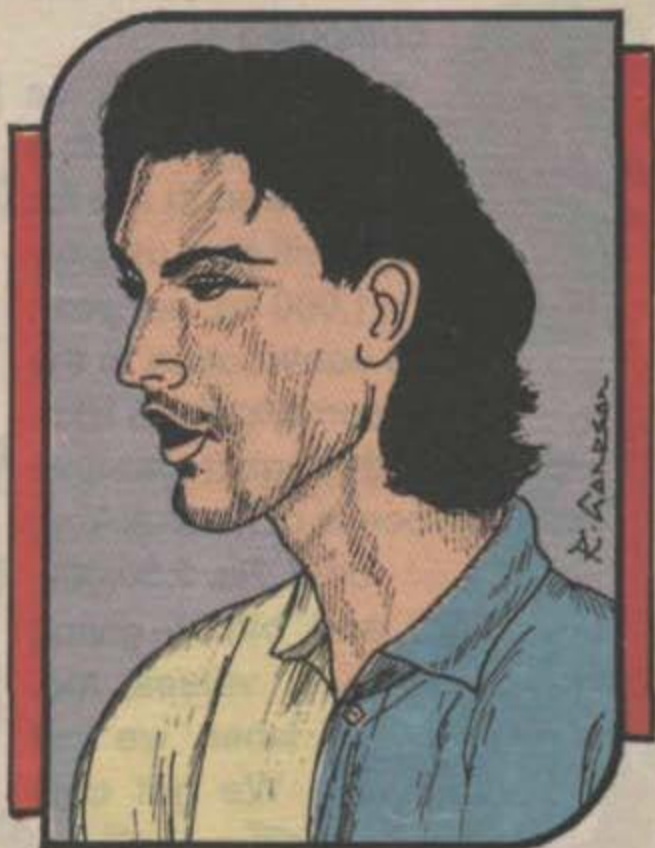
Here's one up on Australia as well as England, and that credit goes to the Pakistani wicket-keeper Tahir Rasheed (playing for Habib Bank against Pakistan Automobile Corpo-



ration in the Wills Patron's Trophy in Gurjranwala on November 30 last) who set a world record of nine dismissals (8 catches and one stump) in a single innings. The earlier record of eight victims was held jointly by Australian Test keeper Wally Grout and David East who played for Essex county.

An 'ace' record

Here's another 'ace' but of a different variety. In December, the Grand Slam Cup was on in Munich, Germany. Goran Ivanisevic of Yugoslavia was playing Michael Chang of the U.S.A. in the semi-final. The American beat the big-hitting Croatian convincingly, but did not realise at that time that the latter had made a world record! Ivanisevic had blasted 25 aces to become the first tennis player to cross 1,000 aces *in one season*. His total at the end of the day was 1,017.



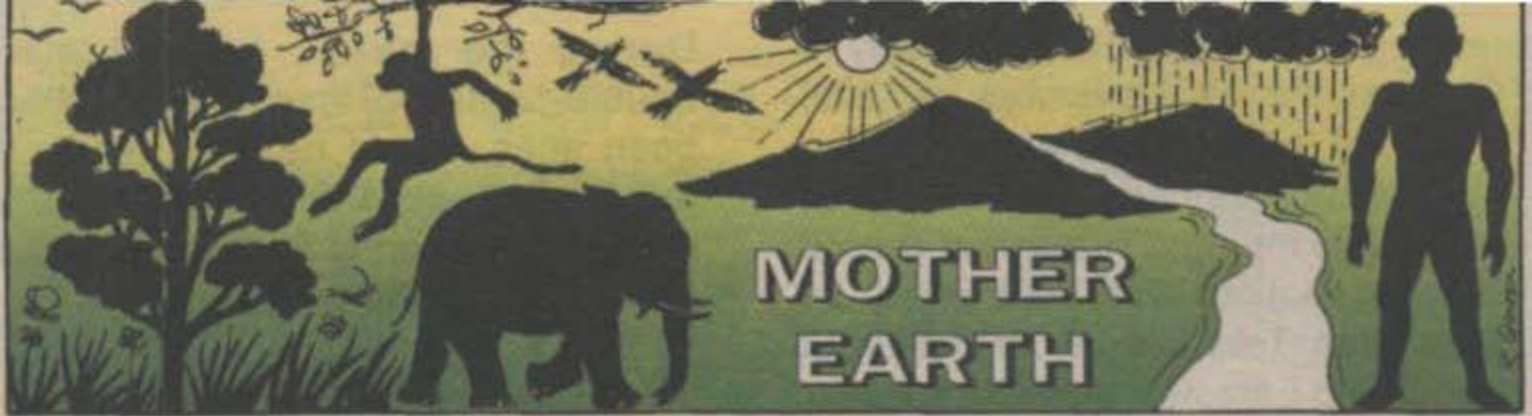
During the match, he had also double-faulted 19 times. If all that had been aces, would he have reached the final of what is considered the richest (6 million U.S. dollars) tennis tournament in the world?

Crowned third time

The European Footballer of the Year (1992) award has been won by Marco Van Basten of Holland, who plays for A.C. Milan. The Dutch striker had won the same award in 1988 and 1989. He became the third player to be crowned three times—the others being Johan Cruyff of Holland and



Michael Platini of France. The award was voted by European soccer journalists.



VALUE OF A TREE

We have already told you very briefly about the role trees play in our life. We calculate in terms of money things produced with our own labour. But who can determine the value of the service which Nature renders us? We channelise electricity into our homes or factories. The expense we calculate is related to the human labour that goes into it. How can we calculate the value of electricity proper? Man did not invent it; man only discovered it. Similarly, we are nowadays using Solar energy for heating water and doing a few other things. But what could we do if this power was not made available to us by the Sun?

We take trees for granted. We calculate their price in terms of our immediate use, say, in using the wood as furniture. But do we ever think of its value for its silent, spontaneous service? If at all we can calculate it, it will be like this, as a scholar has computed it!

The value of a fully grown tree can be Rs. 15,75,000! A fifty-year-old tree with a allowed to live for 50 ton weight, if will give us oxy- another fifty years, 1,000 kg. per year. gen at the rate of its contribution to the For 50 years, 50,000 kg. come to Rs. 5 lakh. purification of air will through it amounts Recycling of water done to Rs. 3 lakh. The process of its checking the soil erosion should cost Rs. 2,50,000. Sheltering animals and birds—giving live protein—has its values, too. But what happens when we cut down such a tree? We get only five thousand rupees!



grown tree can be year-old tree with a allowed to live for will give us oxy- 1,000 kg. per year. Its contribution to the come to Rs. 5 lakh. through it amounts process of its checking cost Rs. 2,50,000. and birds—giving values, too. when we cut We get only



VEER HANUMAN

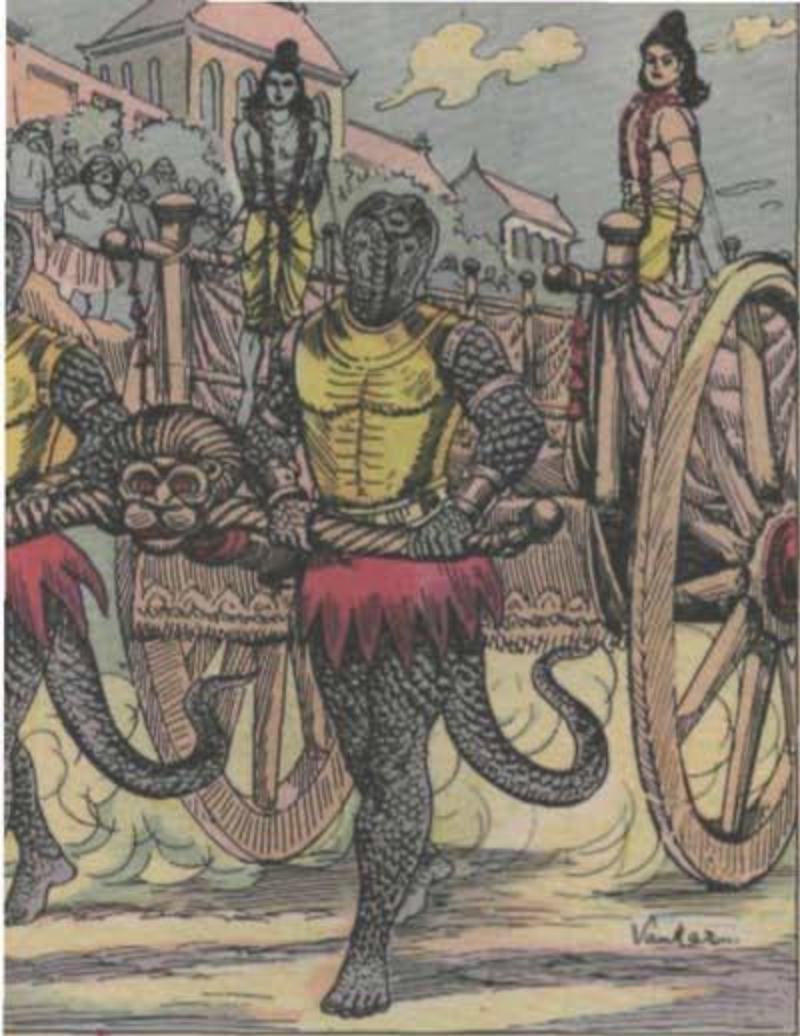
31

(When Vibhishana gets the news of the meeting between Ravana and Mahiravana of the Patala kingdom, he alerts the Vanara leaders about possible trouble from the Patala ruler. Soon they find that Rama and Lakshmana have been cleverly abducted. Hanuman is sent to Patala to rescue them. At the entrance to Patala, he meets Matsya Vallabha and his mother Swarchala, who introduces Matsya Vallabha to his father, and tells Hanuman that he can get help from Chandrasena who knows all the secrets of Mahiravana.)

After Swarchala had led away her son, Matsya Vallabha, Hanuman found the main entrance to Patala unguarded. He could now easily enter and roam around that nether world. He was wonderstruck by the beauty of its architecture. From one corner he heard a lot of noise and loud conversation, and went

towards that place.

He soon came upon a temple for Mother Kali in a large cave. Outside, the temple was heavily decorated with buntings and lighted lamps. The light from the lamps lit the entire area. There was a long line of soldiers carrying on their heads pots of different sizes. They were all going



towards the temple. Hanuman guessed that the pots might contain offerings for the goddess. Some of them were swaying and singing. Evidently, they had been tempted to taste the contents on the sly, especially nectar, which had intoxicated them. From a distance, Hanuman could see them enter the temple and come out after keeping the vessels inside. He slowly approached the temple.

There was drum-beating going on in front of the temple which, Hanuman realised, was getting ready for the sacrifice of Rama

and Lakshmana early morning the next day. He wanted to enter the temple unnoticed by anybody. He, therefore, took the form of a tiny lizard and entered the sanctum sanctorum. He found vessels with different offerings to be used during the *puja*. In one vessel, there was milk, butter in another, ghee in another, tender coconut in yet another. Right in front of the idol was a circular device. Hanuman guessed that it was to be used for killing Rama and Lakshmana. It looked fearsome.

Equally awesome was the face of the idol. The very sight was enough to send a shiver down anybody. Hanuman stood before the idol with folded hands and implored: "O Mother! You're the embodiment of Justice. Do you still want to side with those evil-doers? Would you be satisfied only by drinking the blood of Rama and Lakshmana?" Hanuman's voice had a trace of anger.

Mother Kali soon appeared before him. "Hanuman! Don't you know that I won't forsake my devotees?" said the goddess. "Mahiravana's end is near. You'll get back Rama and Lakshmana.



Your efforts towards that will bear fruit. You've my blessings!" She then disappeared.

Hanuman prostrated in front of the idol. Getting up, the first thing he did was to close the door of the sanctum sanctorum. He then hid himself behind the idol.

Meanwhile, Mahiravana's palace was busy like a beehive. His bed chamber was being decorated to receive Chandrasena after their wedding, which was to follow the sacrifice of Rama and Lakshmana. Mahiravana was personally supervising the arrangements. The time to proceed to the temple was nearing and he became impatient that his brother Agravana was yet to join him. What must be delaying him? he wondered. He called a servant and asked him to go to his brother's palace and remind him.

Meanwhile, in an adjacent palace, the matronly demoness, Kandaki, was adorning Chandrasena with jewellery and perfumes. Poor girl! She sat through the exercise like a statue. Kandaki every now and then dinned into her ears how lucky she was to get a husband like Mahiravana. She was dreaming as if she



was already watching the grand ceremony.

There was a sudden commotion in the courtyard as Rama and Lakshmana were brought there. Now they were no longer tiny doll-like figures, but had been given their original form. They were put on a vehicle and tied to two corners. The vehicle was pulled by two huge snakes along the streets so that the people of Patala could have a good view of them. Shouts rose from them as they stood on either side of the streets watching the spectacle.





When Chandrasena heard the shouts, she could not desist from going up to the balcony to find out what the commotion was all about. She was shocked by what she saw and quickly withdrew from the balcony. She ran down from her room, into the courtyard, where she fell down in a swoon. Kandaki followed her, but she lay motionless. The demoness then gathered her in her arms, and took her inside and put her on a cot. She had no time to lose.

She proceeded to the temple where she was to be the high priestess. After worship, she was

supposed to hand over the offerings, to Mahiravana. Soon she began an elaborate *puja*, anointing the idol first with milk, then butter, ghee and tender cocount. She emptied vessel after vessel. Later she took a pot of nectar and began pouring it over the idol, when she heard a voice: "I don't like any worship with nectar. Do it with milk!"

Kandaki was taken aback. She thought the command was really coming from the idol. She was also surprised, because till then Mother Kali had not shown any displeasure over anointing Her with nectar. She wondered why the goddess had taken a sudden dislike for nectar. Anyway, Kandaki decided that if that was Kali's wish, she would better carry it out. She went out and called for more milk. The demons in attendance there ran for milk which was brought in several vessels. The anointing went on as if it would never end. All the while, Hanuman thoroughly enjoyed it, as everything went into his wide open mouth. He now felt rejuvenated with greater energy and enthusiasm.

Mahiravana was watching the

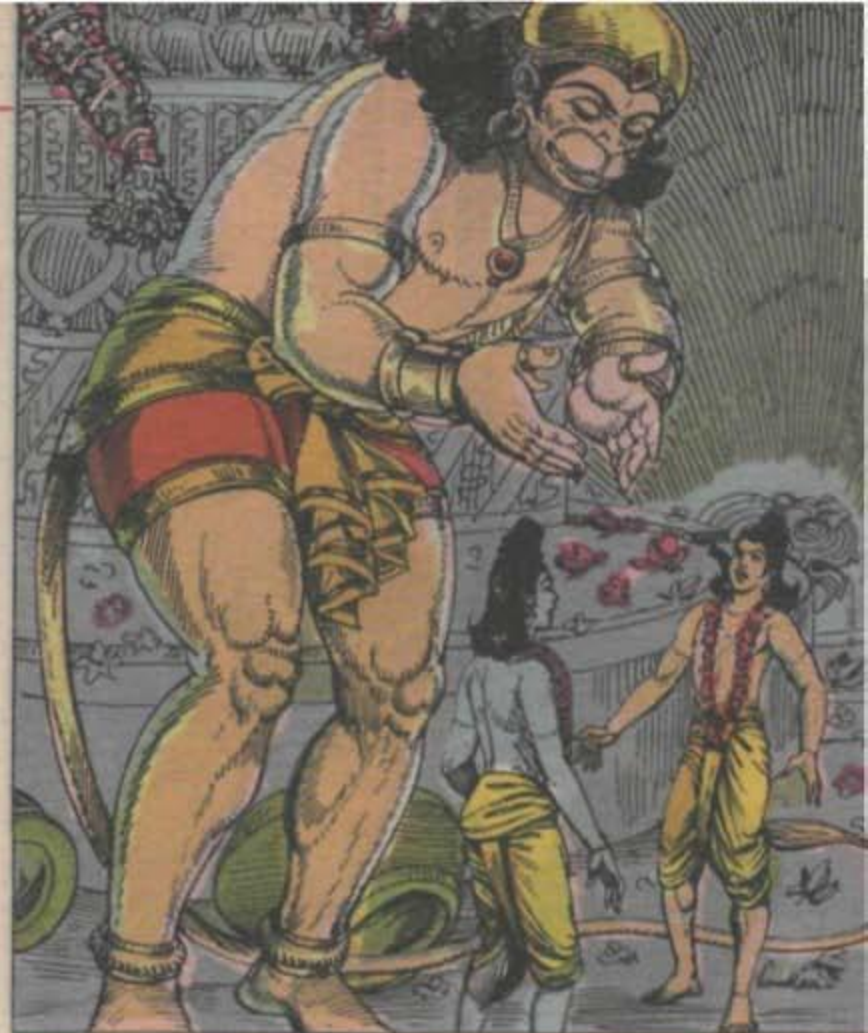


puja with extreme devotion. "O Mother! I've fulfilled whatever you desired. Won't you appear before me at least now and bless me in my mission?"

From behind the idol, Hanuman said softly: "I want your brother to offer worship to me. After all he is elder to you."

Agravana was standing behind Mahiravana. "Brother, today Mother seems to be more pleased with you. She wants you to do the *puja* for her first," he told his brother.

Agravana was like a mountain. Because of his size, he could move only very slowly. He had also some difficulty in entering the sanctum sanctorum. The moment he got inside, the door was closed behind him by none else than Hanuman. Mahiravana was holding by both hands a tray of special offerings for Kali. So Hanuman could easily wrap his arms around his neck from behind. Mahiravana could not free himself and breathe properly. In no time he lay dead in Hanuman's hands. He dragged the body to one corner and, opening the door, he shouted: "Mahiravana! Now send Rama



and Lakshmana inside. Let them carry garlands for me."

Mahiravana took it to be another command from Mother Kali and sent Rama and Lakshmana inside. Once they were in, Hanuman said softly, "O, Brothers from Ayodhya's Raghu-vamsa! Please close the door first!"

Lakshmana was bewildered. He looked at Rama with surprise. "Brother! let's do as we are told. Who knows, it may not be for our good?" said Rama.

"Now, you may look carefully behind the idol!" Hanuman told



them. When they saw Hanuman emerging from behind the idol, there was no end to their surprise. He told them all that had happened and showed them the bows and arrows lying at the feet of the idol. He resumed his huge figure and carried Rama and Lakshmana on either shoulder and slowly came out of the sanctum sanctorum.

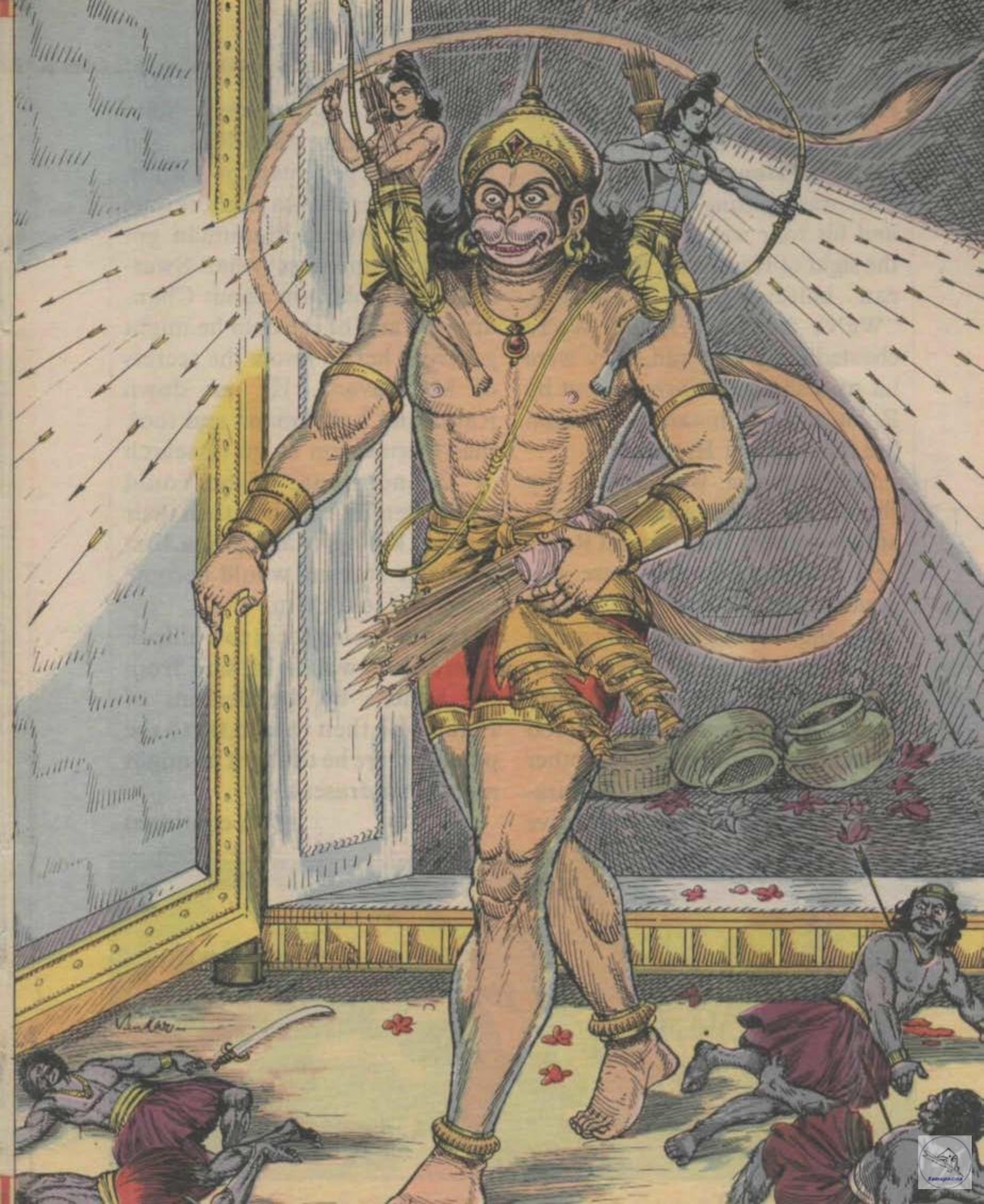
People had gathered there eager to see Rama and Lakshmana being offered to the goddess. The auspicious hour was approaching, yet there was no sign of Agravana coming out after

worshipping Mother Kali. They all wondered why he was not leading Rama and Lakshmana for the sacrifice. It was Kandaki the priestess who first suspected that something was amiss. She peeped through the door. She could find none of the offerings there. Neither milk, butter, ghee, or even flowers. Nor could Agravana be seen anywhere in front of the idol. Now a greater suspicion rose in her. "What's this! I can't see Agravana anywhere! Nor can I see Rama and Lakshmana!" she cried aloud.

Her cries of anguish attracted several demons there. "We're all fools! We've been cheated!" she continued to wail. "We were all present here, yet Rama and Lakshmana have managed to escape in front of our eyes. I'm afraid our enemy is now stronger than ever. Someone here has spied on us and let out our secrets. It could be none other than Chandrasena! She should be made to tell the truth!" Kandaki then ran towards the palace.

The demons were dumbstruck. Who could be so brave, so strong, to save Rama and Laksh-





mana from the sanctum sanctorum? They were about to go and open the door when it opened by itself after Hanuman gave it a kick. Fire was spitting from his eyes, and his roar was ear-splitting. At the sight of Hanuman, the demons ran helter-skelter, shouting, "We've been cheated! We're cheated!" As they ran, they were hit by a shower of arrows sent by Rama and Lakshmana perched on the shoulders of Hanuman.

Mahiravana was struck by shame. He began sending arrows at the brothers. But none hit Rama or Lakshmana as they were at a great height. Instead, the arrows from their bows hit Mahiravana inflicting injuries all over. Now, Mahiravana was no ordinary demon. From every drop of blood from his body there arose another Mahiravana. The several Mahiravanas then launched a massive

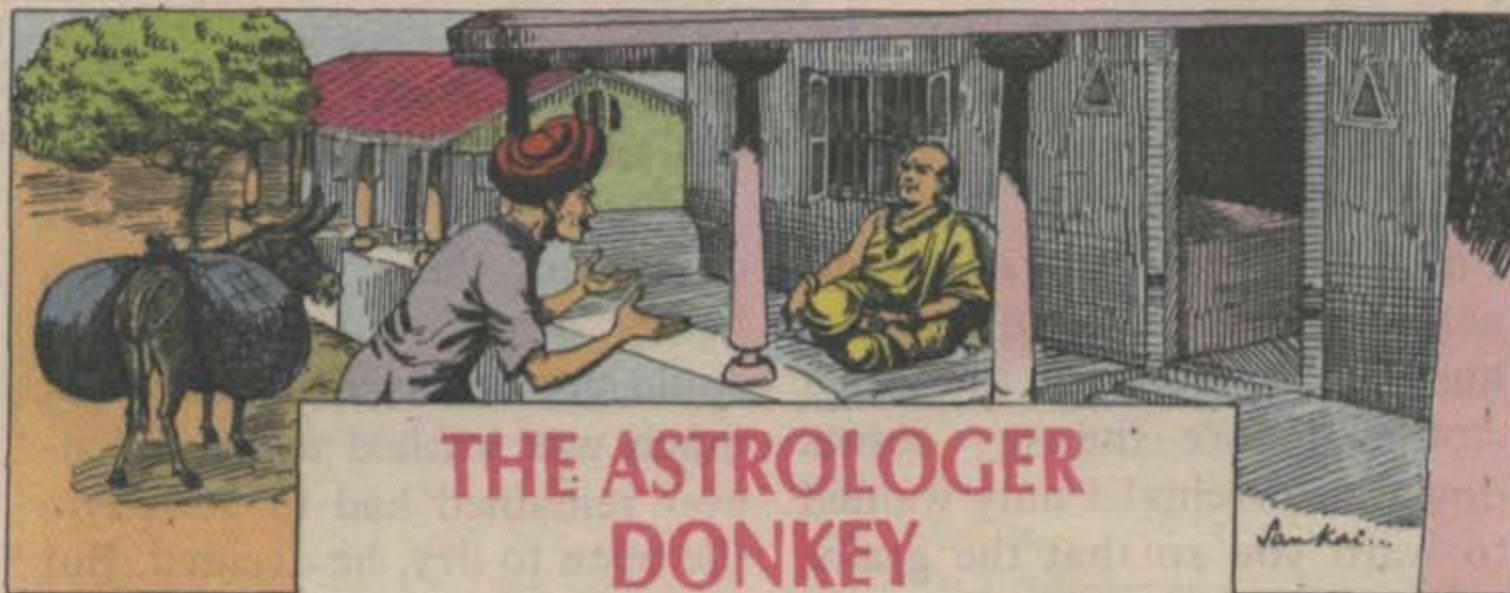
attack on Hanuman and the brothers on his shoulders. Soon several of them lay dead, and Mahiravana retreated for a while.

When there was a slight respite from the attack, Hanuman got time to remember what Swarchala had told him about Chandrasena and of the help he might get from her to know the secrets of Mahiravana. He put down Rama and Lakshmana and took their permission to go in search of Chandrasena. If he could gather details from her, then their task of killing Mahiravana first and later Ravana would become easier, he told them.

Hanuman led them to a hillock where they would be safe from the attacks by the demons of Patala. He then rose to fly to the palace where he thought he might meet Chandrasena.

(To continue)





THE ASTROLOGER DONKEY

Madhavayya was a famous astrologer of Mangalpur. He was an expert in preparing and examining horoscopes as well as making predictions, which invariably proved correct. People had absolute faith in his forecast. Whatever he said came to be accepted in toto.

His fame spread far and wide. Word even went to the King of Mangalpur. He made enquiries about Madhavayya and appointed him the royal astrologer. Now more people began consulting him and soon he became very rich. He acquired farm-lands all over the place, and though he stayed in the capital so that he was available to the king whenever he wanted him, Madhavayya often visited his village to supervise the work in his farms.

One day, he was on such a visit to one of his farms. Harvesting had just taken place, and the courtyard was full of grains. The bright sun made them aglow. As he stood there giving instructions to his servants, there came Narasappa the washerman, with his donkey carrying a huge bundle of clothes. "It may rain in the next two hours; there's just time enough to cover the grains!" he alerted Madhavayya.

The astrologer in him could not accept the remark straight away. "Ah! You seem to have a smattering knowledge of astrology, Narasappa!" ridiculed Madhavayya. "How're you so sure it's going to rain? There's no single speck of cloud in the sky. Then, how come you predict rain in the next two hours?"

"I haven't studied the position



of stars, the movement of planets, and all that—like astrologers normally do. But this much I'm sure of. There'll be rain in the next one hour or so. In fact, I'm hurrying home with the dried clothes before the sky comes down in torrents! I only wanted to warn you so that the grains could be saved. It's now your concern!"

Madhavayya looked up once again, and again a few minutes later. The sky was a clear blue. When he looked up after half-an-hour, he saw a huge cloud formation. 'It's not one of those dark clouds; it won't rain!' he

reassured himself. 'How much can a mere washerman predict!'

He had no time to run for cover, for, there was a sudden heavy downpour. The grains could not be saved. Luckily not much was washed away. Whatever remained had to be left in the open to dry, he decided. But what worried him more than the wet grain was, how could Nara-sappa forecast the rain? And so correctly, too? With all his knowledge of astrology, he himself had been unable to predict something as simple as rain! What a shame!

When the rain stopped,



Madhavayya started for home. On his way, he dropped in at Narasappa's place. "Tell me, how could you predict the rain when I myself could not see a trace of it before it came down?"

"Oh! That was very simple," Narasappa explained condescendingly. "Whenever there is a possibility of rain, the hair on my donkey will stand erect; it will raise its tail and bray for a long while. My donkey had done just that as I was collecting the clothes from the clothesline. I was, therefore, convinced that it would rain. Your books and treatises on astrology would not mention these simple commonplace things. What use, then, is your astrology based on stars and planets which are so far away?"

Madhavayya hung his head in shame. He realised he should not

have ridiculed Narasappa. Even an ordinary washerman can be knowledgeable with common-sense. "Narasappa, I now understand," he said, patting the washerman on his back. "Just one request. Let others not know what happened between us today. Everybody thinks that I'm a great astrologer. Their faith in me should not be shattered."

Narasappa readily agreed. However, word went round and several people came to know of the controversy between Madhavayya and Narasappa. They went about saying, "We would better consult Narasappa's donkey than Madhavayya!" Though Madhavayya did not hear this himself, he guessed something must have happened when the number of people waiting before his door dwindled day by day.





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Ishq
mera
mazhab hai.
**Rasna Mera Drink
Hai.**



Yesterday at my school drama, I was
like Amitabh Bachchan as in 'Khuda Gawah'.
And everyone clapped and applauded.
And when I came home you know what
Mummy asked? 'So little Ustaad, what
do you want to drink?' You know what
I said? 'Ishq mera mazhab hai,
Rasna Mera Drink Hai.' And then
I drank up the whole jug of
pyaara Rasna...



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